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CREATE A REALISTIC KNIGHT IN MIXED MEDIA

TOUGHEN UP GETTING AN ART CRIT? HERE'S HOW NOT TO TAKE IT PERSONALLY

Welcome to...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Hello friends, how are you? What's that? Yes, there's an ink drawing of a man on the cover. No biggie. We were so taken with the fluidity and intricate line art of Andrew Mar's work on Instagram that we simply had to have him create our cover. If you don't already follow him on Instagram, take a trip to @andrewkmar. Oh, and say hello and give a follow to@imaginefxmagazine while you're there!

I'd like to thank you for buying this edition of ImagineFX. We live in a world of information overload, which can leave us frazzled. So, if you can, take a little time to switch off from your usual digital interruptions and sit and read something in these pages from start to finish. And relax...

Finally, and I know bang on about this a lot, but why don't you submit your work to us? It's easy: just send in up to five images of either traditional or digital art, along with their titles and a short explanation of how or why you created it. Add in a short biography, a photo of you and then email it to fxpose@imaginefx.com. Or, if you want to be considered for a workshop, send a bio and a link to your website to the email address below. Do it!

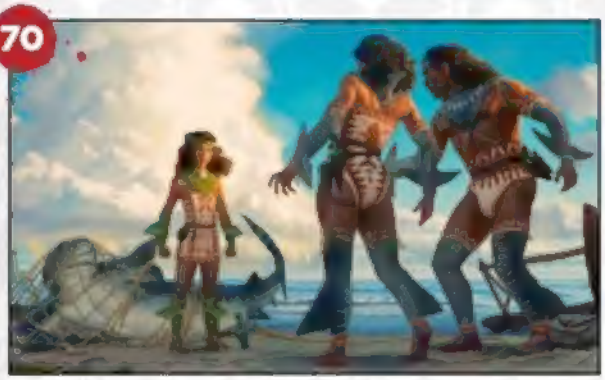
Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...

The one and only Syd Mead
Is Syd the most famous concept artist – or should I say visual futurist – ever? He just might be...

Robot bears and mech whales
Oh, Jake Parker, you had me at robot bears. Thank you for your sketchbook full of kooky mash-ups.



Narrative and storytelling
I loved discovering the detailed back story that Jason Rainville gave his characters for his workshop.

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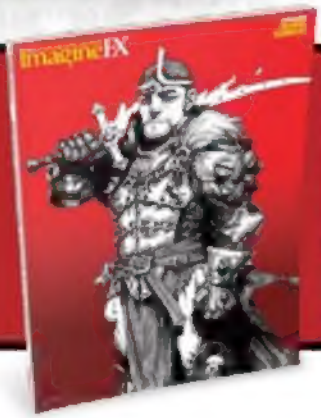

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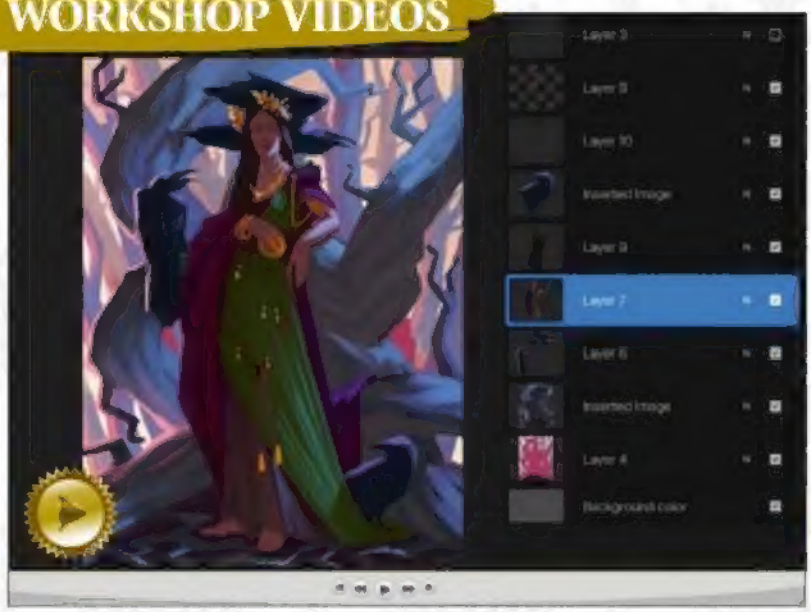
ImagineFX Resources

Getting hold of all of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **http://ifxm.ag/drawing155skills**

OVER 3 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Find out what's new in Procreate 4

In her figure workshop on page 84, Tatiana Svistunova goes through some of Procreate's new features. Watch her video to see the art app in action.

Develop your narrative skills

Jason Rainville packs in plenty of story beats into his art. Learn how by turning to page 70 and watch his video, too.

PLUS 3 CUSTOM BRUSHES

FLAT CHALK
Jason Rainville uses this soft brush to paint the clouds in his excellent fishing village scene.

RECTANGLE TEXTURED
In contrast, this brush enables Jason to illustrate harder surfaces in the environment, such as rocks.

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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX ARTIST MONTH

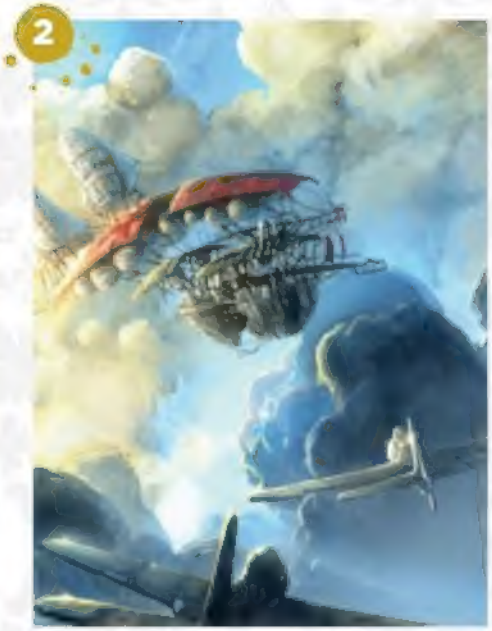
1 DIVER DOWN
"Our little hero is nothing on dry land, but always finds adventure beneath the waves. Venturing deeper yet, a watery meddling most foul is found: a mermaid in distress!"

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Jude Godin

LOCATION: Canada MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.judegodin.com

"Our family was moving constantly looking for 'Paradise' and I found it as a 10 year old in Hawaii, on a sun-lit table in a hairdressers' salon: It was a copy of Heavy Metal," says Jude.



2 AIR STATION ZEBRA
"Concept art for a personal project. This scene shows the dawn patrol on their way to the air station Zebra – the outermost station of the crumbling airborne empire."

3 CAT LADY
"This illustration of a futuristic lady holding her defensive feline was just a quick test of my workflow, but it's become a favourite for its simple lines, comical storytelling and bright colours."

4 FALLOUT FAMILY
"This snapshot of a post-apocalyptic family was a commission for a friend. I laid down a minimal palette of rusts and blues to make these wasteland warriors pop in their faded outfits."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

1

1 MASTER OF CEREMONIES
"This child has been removed from the real world by psychological damage and must either face herself and become human again, or turn into a wild creature that transforms into a raven."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Jeszika Le Vye

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.jeszika.com

Jeszika describes herself as an "imaginative realist painter", and her work explores themes of psychology and philosophy. "In my art, I explore what gives a thing its substance, its soul," she explains.

2 PETER PAN

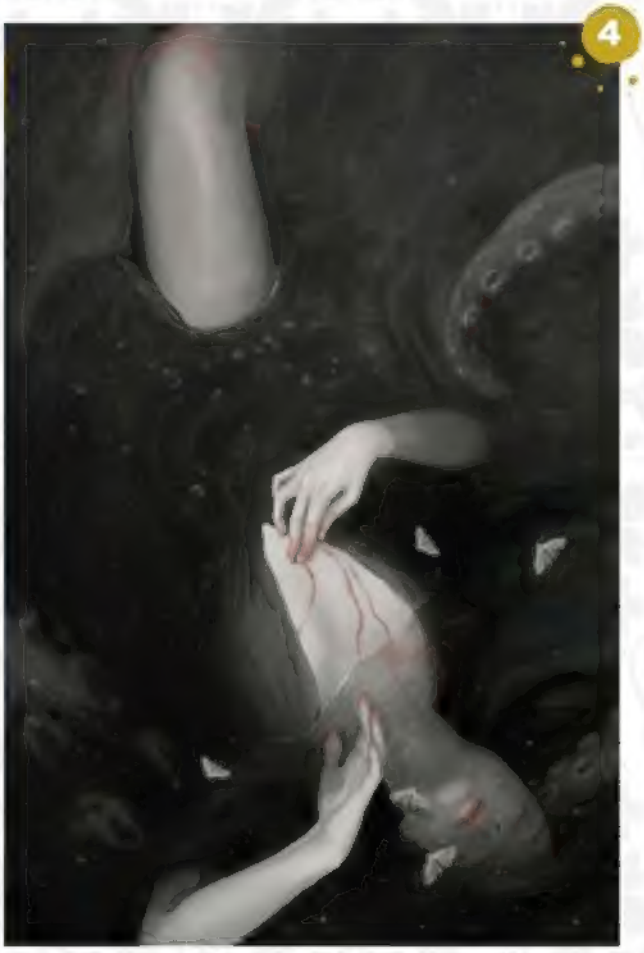
"This painting appeared almost fully realised in my mind. The piercing eyes brought to mind Peter Pan; an ageless child living away from reality, in his own world."

3 PIED PIPER

"This explores child mortality. I imagined a grim reaper-figure leading the child away from the known world. The little girl, not able to fully understand, is caught between wonder, curiosity and fear."

4 COCOON

"When we become injured, there's a choice of whether we want to heal ourselves or not. Do we drown ourselves in the pain, or do we regrow damaged parts – like an octopus that's able to regenerate its limbs?"

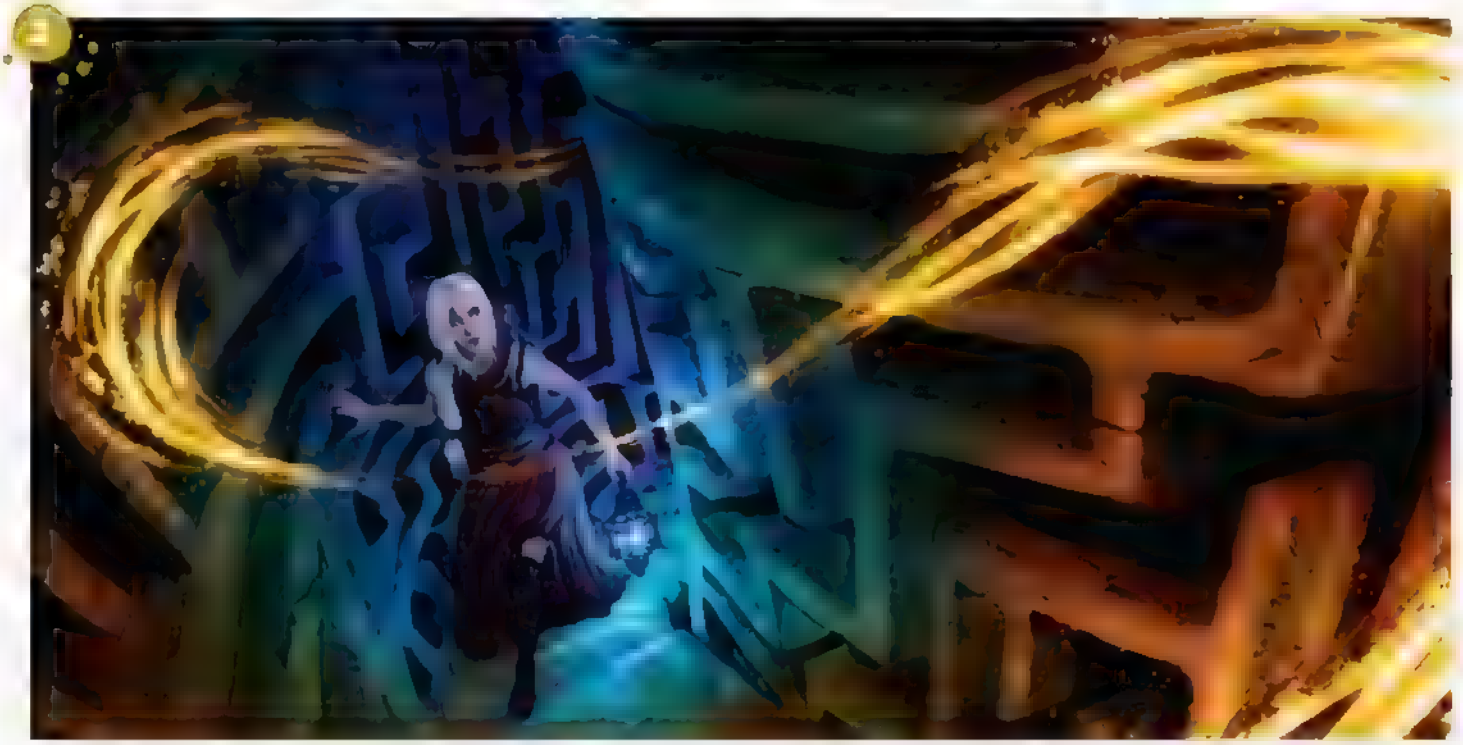


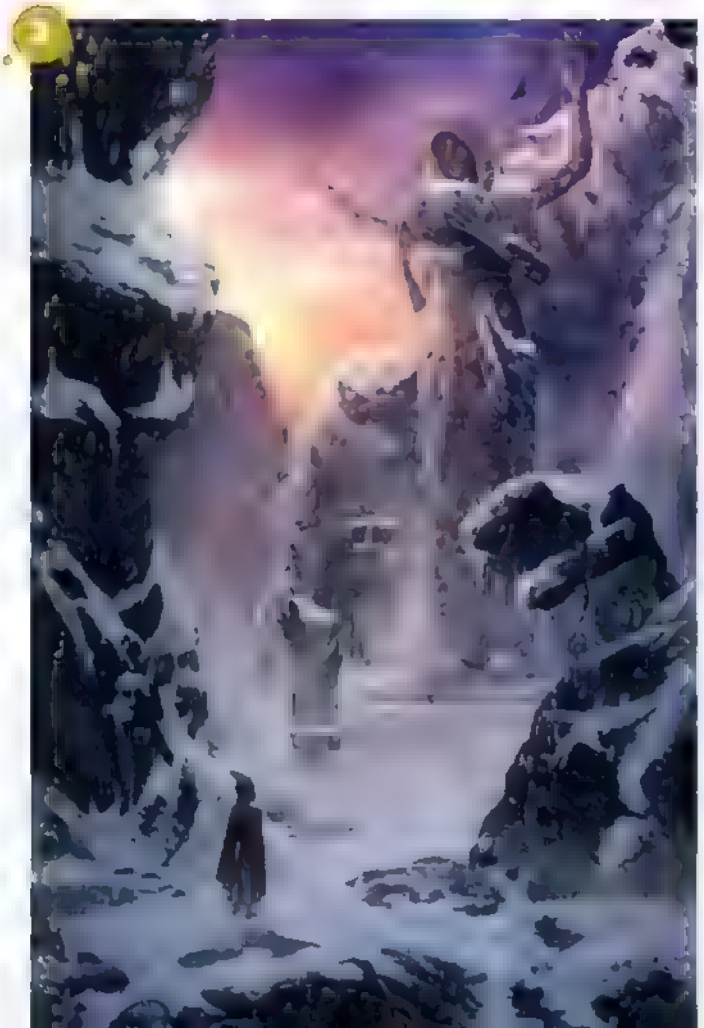
1 GUARDIAN
"For this otherworldly being, I started off with a DAZ Studio 3D model. I modelled it and added the staff in ZBrush, then painted over the character in Photoshop."

Lauren Covarrubias

LOCATION US MEDIA Photoshop, ZBrush, DAZ Studio, Blender WEB laurencovarrubias.wixsite.com/lilustrator

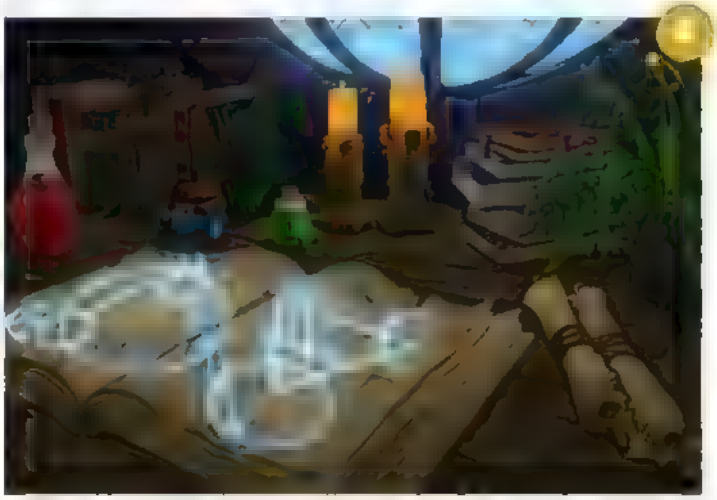
Lauren studied illustration at California State University, and has since been honing her skills in digital art and illustration through exploring new techniques based around her passion for sci-fi and fantasy.





2 CLAIRVOYANCE
"Here, I mixed Photoshop with a little bit of 3D. I wanted to capture and freeze a moment of mystery, and enable the viewer to create their own story."

3 PRAISE ON THE PATH
"I created the statue in this image in ZBrush, then painted the environment in Photoshop. I wanted to capture a shrine in the early morning sunlight."



4 SECRET STUDY
"For this painting I wanted the focus to be on props and items on show. These would tell the narrative of a mage's desk."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Ona Naumaviciute

LOCATION: Lithuania MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/artist/angevere

Also known as Angevere, Ona started out in traditional art before getting her first tablet in 2009. "It served me faithfully for several years and helped me enter the world of digital illustration," she says.

1 THE GREAT A'TUIN

"As a big fan of Terry Pratchett's Discworld, I wanted to illustrate the great turtle as I imagined it while reading the books. I tried to give the character more of a magical look."

2 ONE WITH MANY FACES

"A character I drew for a Venice-themed character design challenge. I wanted her to have a mysterious persona with its own motives and secrets."

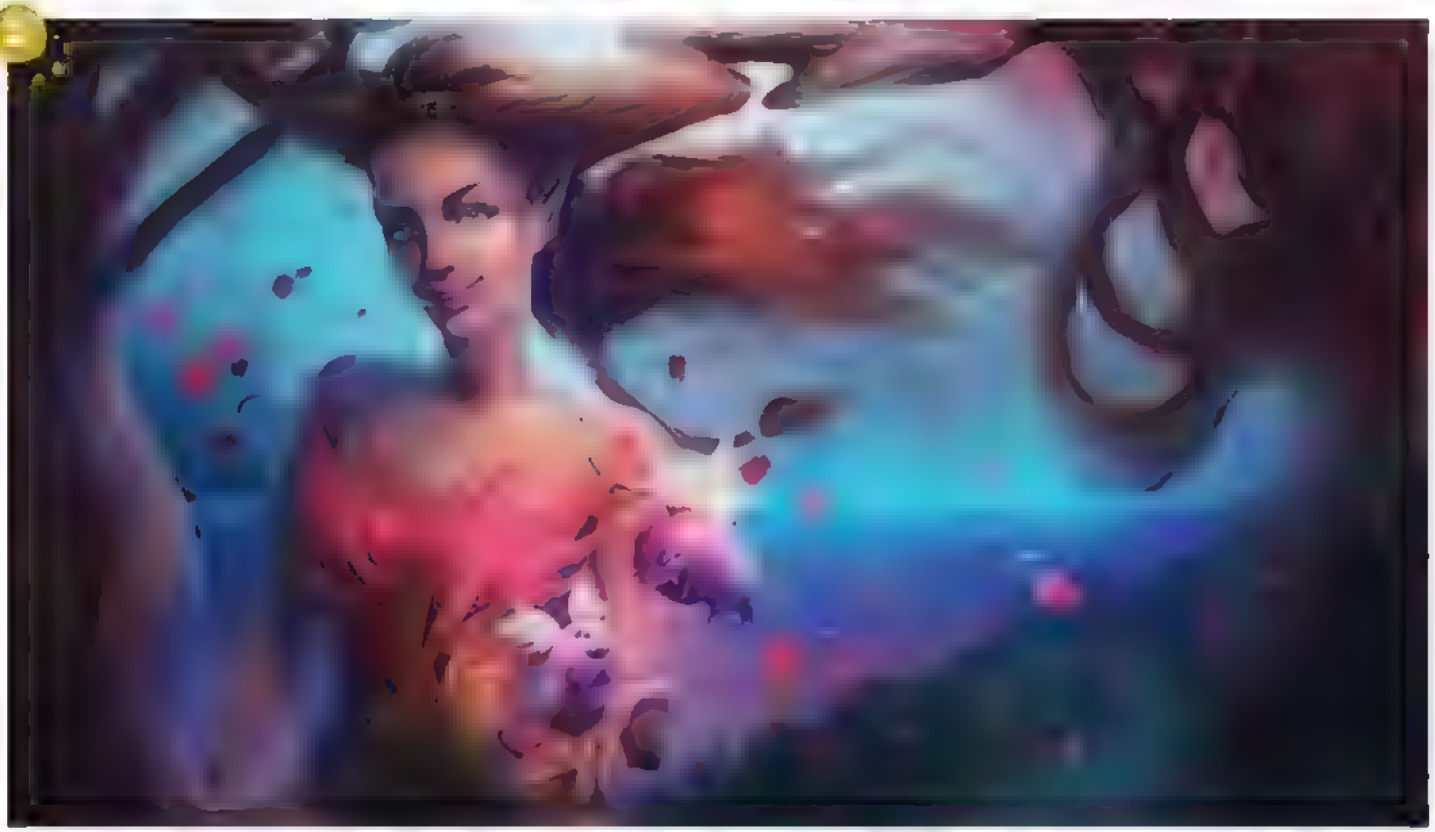
THE SWEET DELUSION

"This is a good example of how I love to mix human figures with nature and fantasy. Overall, I'm most concerned with the simple beauty of it all."

Sandra Winther

LOCATION: Norway MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.sandramalie.deviantart.com

Sandra taught herself digital art, with the help of free tutorials available online. "Being from Norway, snow, water, cold and dark skies are close to my heart," she says.



2 MAGICAL FOREST

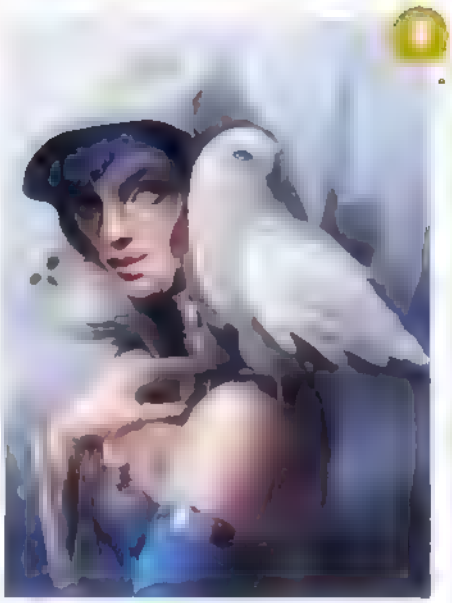
"For this artwork I played with strong colours, fantasy creatures and nature. There's a warm feeling to this painting, in contrast to the coldness in most of my artwork."

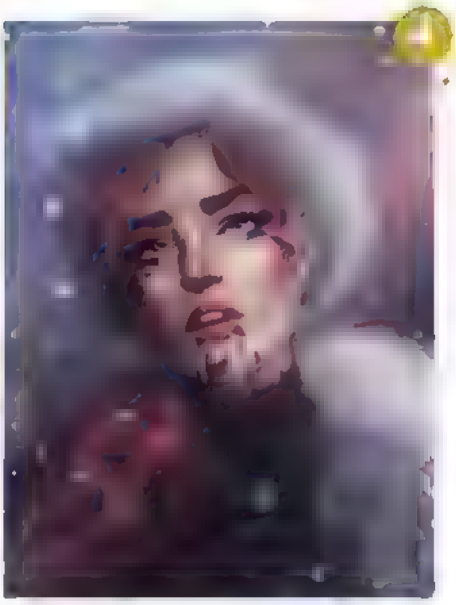
3 THE ENSLAVED RANGER

"I made up a story for this character – she's an enslaved warrior bound by magical chains. The cold feeling in the artwork makes me feel at home."

4 NORTHERNER

"A recurring subject for me the past year is the female warrior. I've experimented with different styles, but Northern-looking warriors – inspired by Game of Thrones – are a favourite of mine."





ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

MAPPING OUT THE FUTURE

EDGY ARTIST
Suzanne Helmigh

WELDING WONDER

How to receive art critiques

Part one We all want praise, but a critique can be more useful for personal development, as leading artists tell **Tom May**

One of the most important ways to improve as an artist is by having your work critiqued. Sometimes you have no choice: as a student, you're critiqued by your tutor; as an employee, by your creative director. At other times, you'll seek out a critique. Either way, it's a great way to get insight into how to improve.

There's just one problem. We're all human and no one likes to be criticised. "Working as an illustrator and concept artist, you always dread the moment where you show the work," admits **Loïc Zimmerman**,

who's an art director at MPC and a teacher at Gnomon. "We all want the tap on the back."

But hiding would be a big mistake. "Peer feedback for both personal and professional work is invaluable, because everyone loses perspective on their own work – both in general and on each piece as they work on it," says **Drew Whitmore**, a principal artist at Atomhawk.

"Getting that outside context gives you a route to seeing your work with clearer eyes."

Loïc agrees. "Learning to accept criticism will make you a better artist; you just have to learn not to take it personally," he stresses. "Nobody's going to hire someone who throws a tantrum each time points are raised, however talented they are."

Art by Hugh Pindur for Paizo's RPG Starfinder which was art directed by Sarah Robinson.

So what can you to do if critiques make you overemotional? In that case, you actually need to get critiqued more often, Drew suggests. "If you're too precious about your artwork and don't get a lot of feedback, that feedback is going to ➤➤

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

DANIEL WARREN

When you take issue with a critique, how should you respond?

How do you go about processing a critique of your work?
I find it's best to look at it from two categories: the fundamental and the stylistic. Fundamental crits involving problems in anatomy, colour, light and so on are flaws that one can find and correct in almost any piece, so take them seriously. These are academic flaws that can't be hidden behind the 'it's my style' defence. Stylistic crits, on the other hand, are critiques based on your style of painting, such as cartoony, hyperrealistic or sketchy. So these can be trickier to absorb. Try to honestly see where the person is coming from, and if they understand where you're trying to take the piece

What if you disagree?
Ask yourself: does the person understand what you are going for? Critique doesn't have to be a one-way process, so discuss what you're going for in the piece with the person you're getting a crit from, so they can understand what works and doesn't.

Any other tips?
Ask for a paint-over from the person critiquing you so that they can show you exactly what they mean. Often, you don't understand the weight of a problem until you can actually see the differences in the 'before' and 'after'. Not everyone always has time to give paint-overs, but they can be immensely helpful, and some of the best, informative crits that one can receive!

Daniel's recently been working on a series of crowdfunded comic books, Steve Lichman, with Dave Rapoza

http ://fcm ug.s-lichman

hurt if it's something you feel strongly about," he reasons. "You have to build up those calluses."

SEE THE CRIT FOR WHAT IT IS

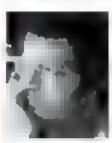
It's also important to take a step back and empathise with the person giving the critique. "Getting a rough crit can feel like a personal attack, simply because you'd put so much of your time, energy and emotion into creating the work," says US artist **Daniel Warren**. "But if someone cares enough to give you a well thought-out critique in the first place, then it means they're invested in your improvement and care enough to help you grow. So see this for what it is: help from a person who's probably dealing with the same things that you are."

"Be open to suggestions," says Daniel Warren. "But don't sacrifice your own style for someone else's just to get a thumbs up."

"Your art may be exciting to the eye, but totally off topic," says Loic Zimmerman. "That's what a critique is all about."

In short, while a critique can often feel like criticism, they're not the same thing. Criticism is often purely based on subjective, personal opinion – whether someone likes your work or not. In contrast, a critique should be purely objective and address one central question: does the piece achieve what the artist has set out to create?

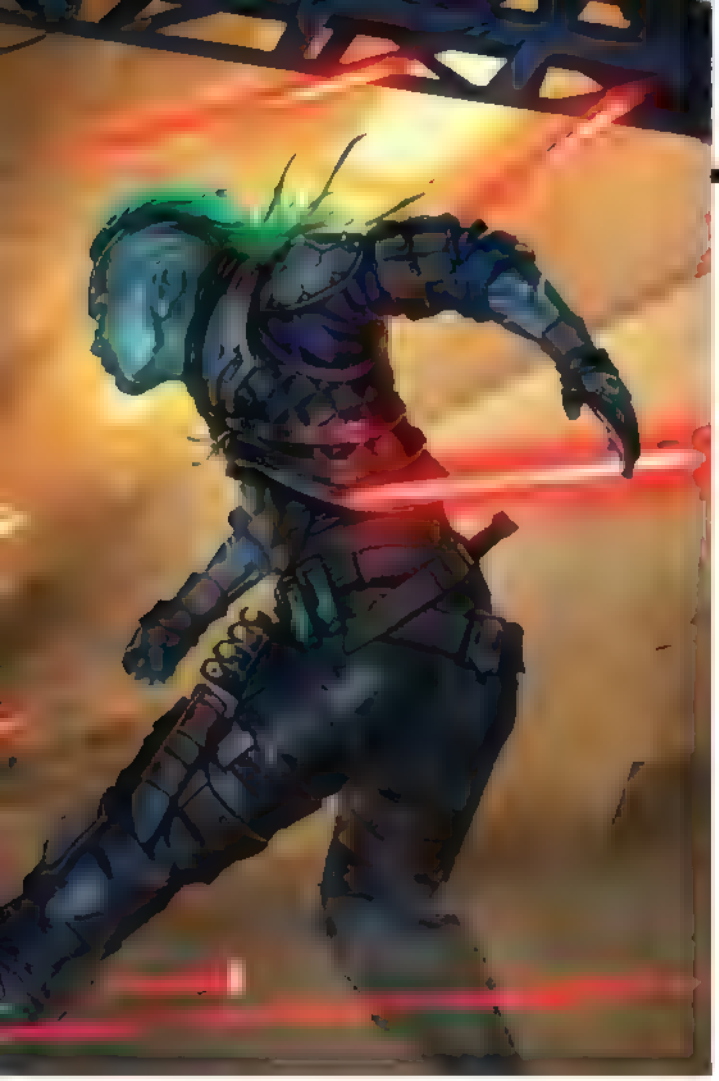
"Lots of artists tend to mix up criticism with an opinion on the quality of their work and their value as an artist," says French art director and freelancer **Pascal Blanché**. "But a critique isn't about you. It's a process that aims to improve the final version of your art. Once you recognise this, you can start to help and guide the person who is critiquing your work by discussing the issue and keeping an open mind."



And note that 'discussing' doesn't mean 'arguing': this is not a zero-sum debate, but a process of constructive dialogue. That's the spirit in which **Sarah Robinson**, creative director for Paizo in Seattle, approaches receiving a critique. "I usually let them happen calmly," she says. "I may not agree with them, but in that case I'll just go ahead and make the requested changes to let them see how it would look, and explain to them why it wouldn't work."

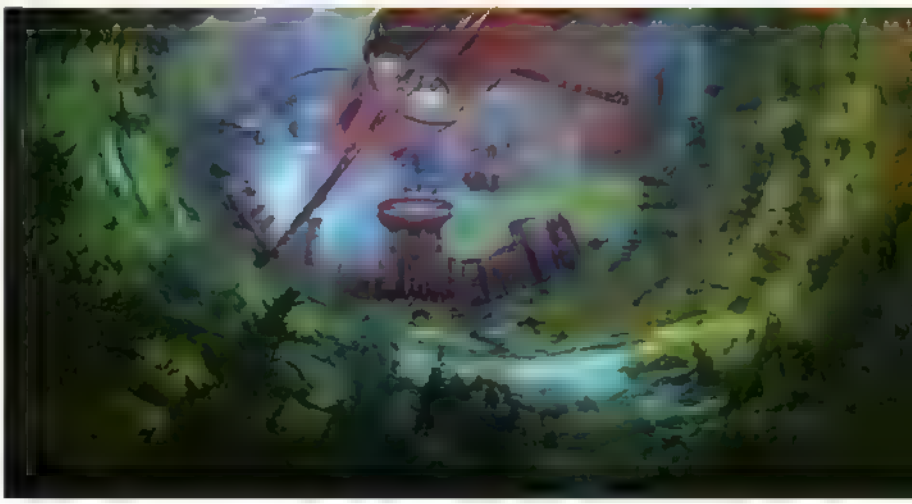
Above all, you should never feel singled out, because receiving a critique is something every artist has to go through. "All visual medium is

"Don't take a critique too personally," says Pascal Blanché. "In the end, everybody has an opinion."



Roberto Pitturru's Laser Battle as art directed by Sarah Robinson. She advises that "being too aggressive when getting a crit may not get you more work"

"Art director or freelancer we all get exposed to critique," says Pascal Blanche. "It's about exposing your work to others' eyes and opinions."



Environment art from the RPG Starfinder as painted by Sebastien Hue and art directed by Sarah Robinson

open for criticism," Sarah stresses. "It's going to happen, so if you can't take it then maybe you're in the wrong business." And the pay-off is that you can use the feedback positively, to improve your art.

JUMPING BOARD

How you do that will vary in different situations, says Drew. "But generally, you can either implement the suggestions, or use their critique as a jumping board for being analytical about your image," he says. "Even if there are bits of a critique that I don't agree with, there's probably still something there to resolve. So I try to see if there are other routes to solving those issues, other than the suggested one, that will still retain what I liked previously."

Most importantly, never stop asking for critiques, because without them, your art is likely to stagnate, says Loïc. "I've done this job long enough that I have passionate people coming in, fresh out of school, who join and slowly fade over the years," he says. "It seems like there's a layer of dust on them, and the flame, the fire in the eyes, just fades. And this is why you need to keep a critical thinking on your own work, and show it to the people who'll help you get better."

And there's no such thing as an artist who's too successful to ask for a critique. "Some of the best people I know ask for opinions," Loïc points out. "You wouldn't expect Jeremy Mann to tell you, 'Hey, what do you think of that painting?', but he does, because he's curious. The most established people, the strongest ones, still want to know."

***NEXT MONTH** In part two, our art experts discuss the techniques you can use to give a critique of another artist's work in a positive, constructive way that both of you can learn from.*

"All visual medium is open for criticism, so if you can't take it then maybe you're in the wrong business."

Syd Mead: Ahead of his time

Feature The film concept art legend tells **Tom May** how he's gathered the best of his iconic work together in a new book

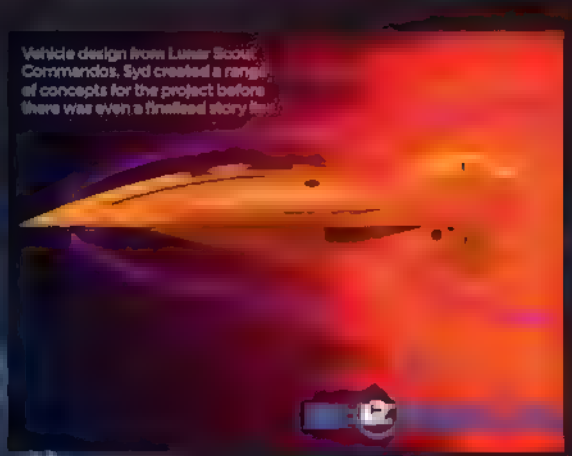
The term 'legend' is bandied about a lot, but Syd Mead is someone who deserves the title. The self-described visual futurist, now 84, has defined the look and feel some of cinema's most iconic sci-fi films. And now his design work has been brought together in The Movie Art of Syd Mead: Visual Futurist, published by Titan Books.

"The book begins with Star Trek: The Motion Picture, which I worked on in post-production, designing the V'ger entity, and Blade Runner – the first movie I worked on all the way through," says Syd. "And it ends with the very latest thing that I've done: concepts for Blade Runner 2049. So it covers my entire movie career to date. It's a nice bracketing."

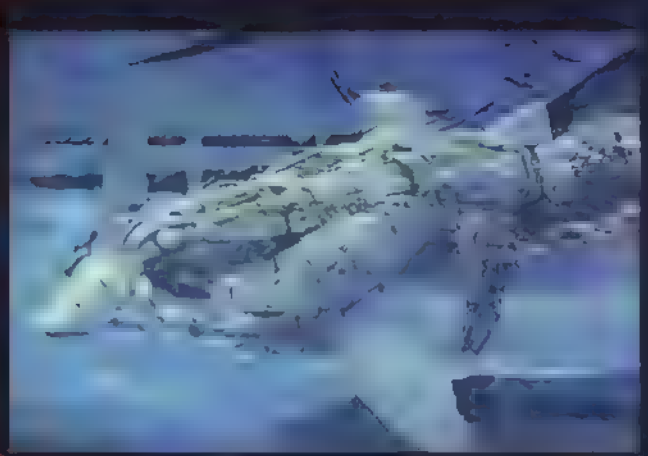
From Aliens and TRON through to Elysium and Mission: Impossible III, seeing all this work in one place makes you realise what's special about Syd. His art may be futuristic and fantastical, but it's also grounded in reality. And that's no coincidence – before his film career, Syd worked as an industrial designer for companies such as Ford and Philips. Everything he learned in that profession, he's applied to his concept artwork.

THE PRETENCE OF REALISM

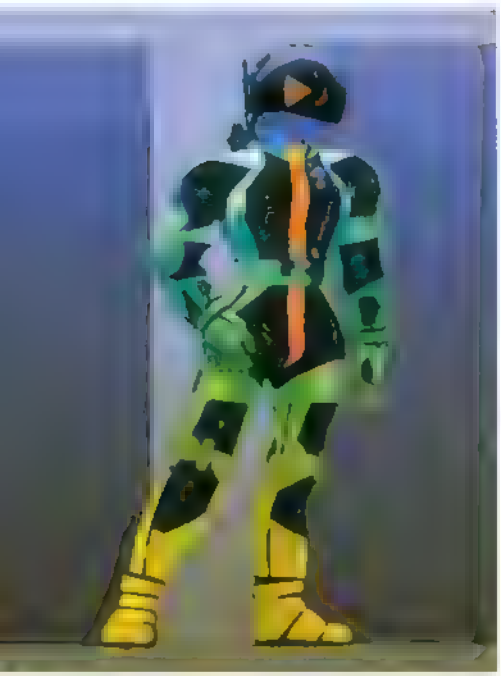
Take the Spinner from Blade Runner. "I imagined it was an aerodyne; an internal lift vehicle much like the Harrier Jump Jet," he says. "You'd need a robust source of power to take off from a dead standstill with a ton and a half of car, so it's a pretence. But it follows a valid engineering principle so you don't need wings coming out, blades turning or fans."



Vehicle design from Lunar Scout Commandos. Syd created a range of concepts for the project before there was even a finalised story line.



Syd worked on the 1995 cyberpunk film Johnny Mnemonic. Here's his concept art of a dolphin fitted with advanced surveillance equipment.



For his project Topeka, Syd developed an "exoskeletal costume" that was based on his extensive engineering experience of servos, valves and hydraulics.

Syd's taken a similar approach to everything he's created for the silver screen. "When I design vehicles and things – even costumes for that matter – I think about the logic of the problem and how to solve it," he says. "Everything should look like it belongs in that particular time period, that technobase, that socio-economic structure. And stylistically, I overlay my thinking process over the demands of the script."

He adds that he only ever works with directors one-to-one. "Then I'll know straight away if I'm on the right track," he reasons. "My involvement always starts with the script – that's the Bible – and talking to the director, that's God. And then you go from there."

Syd's artistic process begins with hand-drawn sketches. "I'll then shade the drawing in with felt-tip markers, then scan that into the computer," he says. "After that, I colour the image digitally, print out a copy to give to the director, and send over digital versions of the sketches, too."

The closing pages of the book feature two of the sketches he did for his latest film, Blade Runner 2049. Syd explains how they came about: "The director, Denis Villeneuve, was a fan of my movie work," he says. "So he came to the house, we had a nice conversation, and he had me doing concept sketches for the scenes set in Las Vegas."

MAKING THE MOST OF THE VIEW

As ever, Syd grounded his Blade Runner 2049 work in reality, using Google Street View as a reference source. "The two prominent features of the area are the pyramid and then the Stratosphere hotel at the end of the Strip," he notes. "So I thought: let's use the pyramid because that's iconic. And I just made a bigger pyramid over the top of it in the form

One of the replicants from Blade Runner is an exotic club dancer. Syd explored hair and mask ideas for the character, which were ultimately discarded.

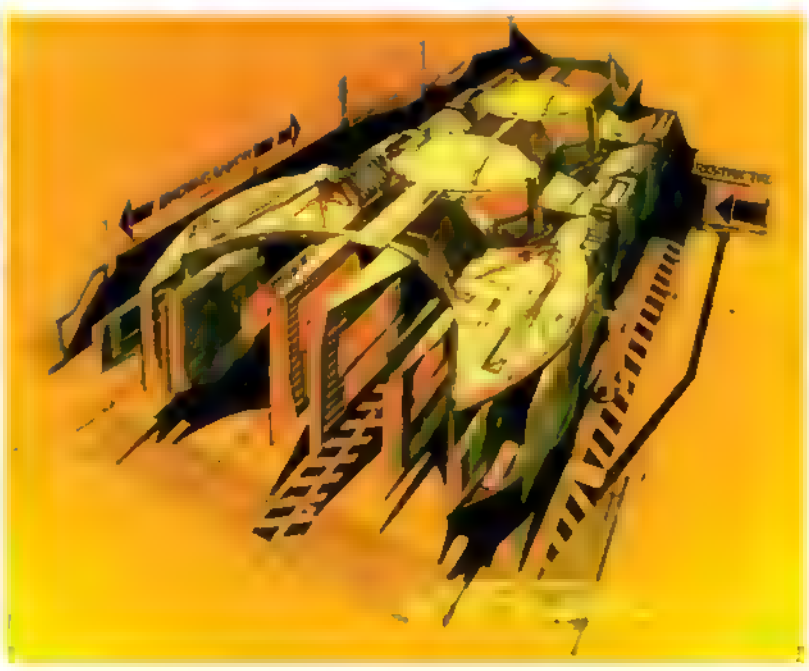
> Remember what you see. You're going to be using your own private catalogue of things you remember all through your life

of a tripod, which would have suites and things. And that appears in the final segment of the movie, just before the finale."

Looking back on a long and successful career, what's Syd's advice to the next generation of artists? "Remember what you see," he stresses. "Because you're going to be using your own private catalogue of things you remember all through your life. So I encourage people to notice everything.

"Why does the shadow from a tree not have as sharp edges as the shadow from you standing on the ground? It's because the light disperses as it travels through the air. It's a very simple thing. But you have to notice these things."

The Movie Art of Syd Mead: Visual Futurist is published by Titan Books. Turn to page 96 to read our review of the book.



For his eco-city project Ektopia, Syd envisaged a futuristic urban habitat that worked with nature rather than against it.

Asked to produce concepts of the vehicle from 2003's The Core, Syd corrected the original drill-based idea from the script and created a machine fitted with a laser that liquefied rock as it passed through the Earth.

ImagineFX

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

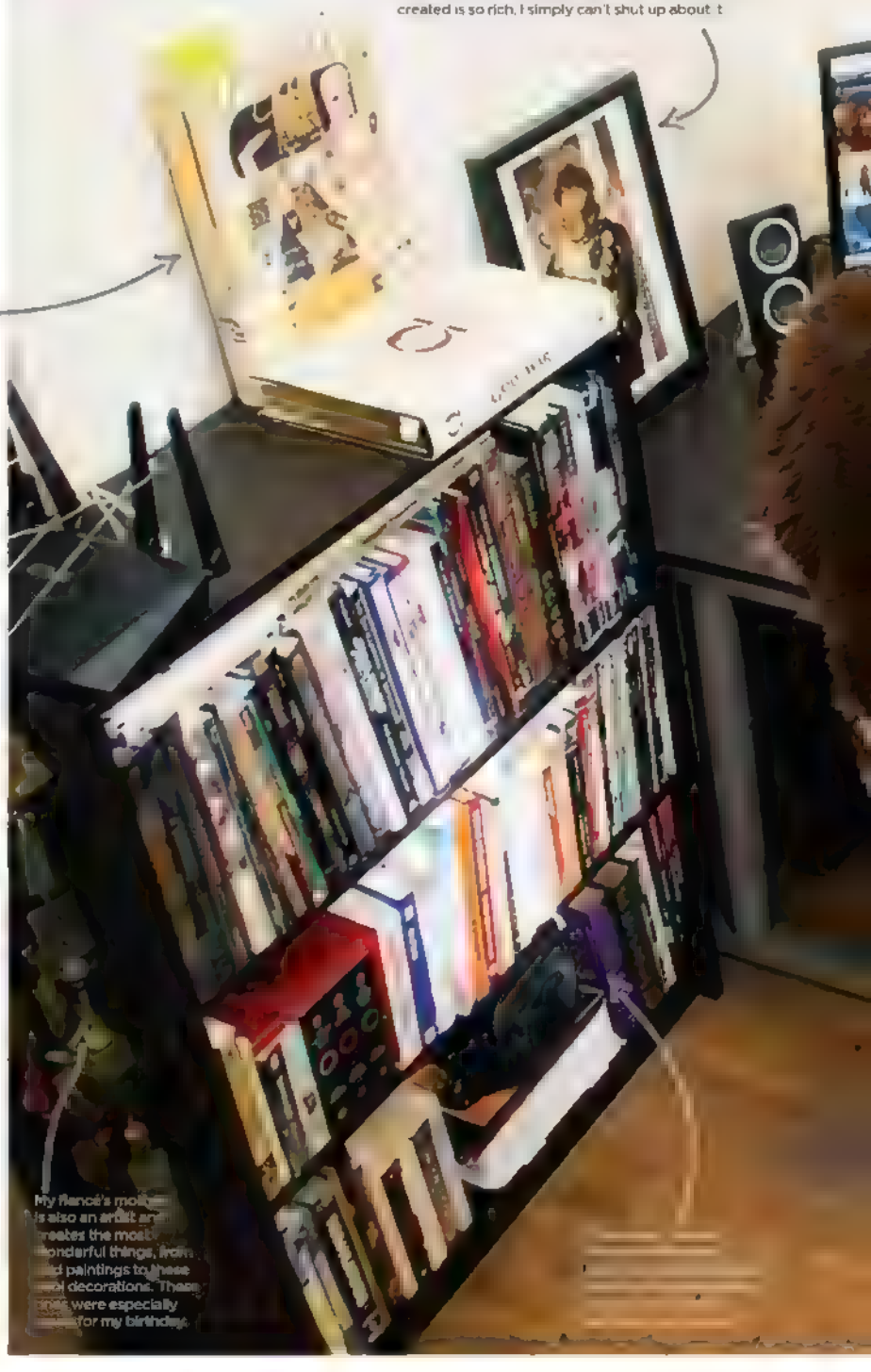
Suzanne Helmigh

Tools of the trade This fantasy artist likes to wield a sword and axe as much as her Wacom stylus and paint brush…

This home office of mine is pretty small, but the high ceiling, tall windows and the open wall towards the hallway all succeed in giving it a spacious feel. I love that it's a light, bright space, but dislike the glare that appears on my screens. So most of the time I pull all the curtains shut and avoid the sun like a vampire.

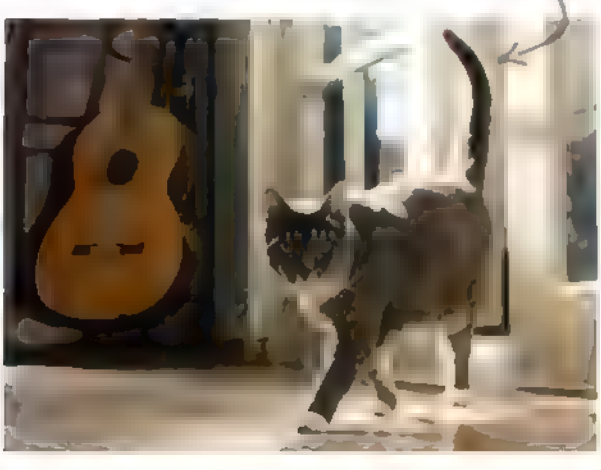
Without having too much clutter around my studio, I really like having plenty of reference material within easy reach. The weaponry, coffers, pelts and leathers go hand in hand with both what I paint and my secondary hobby, which involves being a HEMA (historical European martial arts) fighter and re-enactor. I believe that it's important to have another passion next to art, to get me out of that chair and stay fit. That's

My home office is littered with Dragon Age art and books – I'm quite the fan. The world that BioWare created is so rich, I simply can't shut up about it



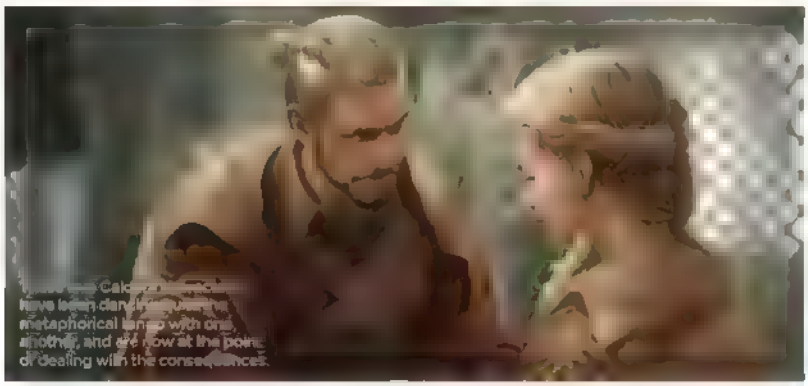
Gustav Klimt is one of my favourite artists. His work has something that I highly aspire to one day possess myself: a unique voice

What's a home office without a pet? This is Shiva – she's quite an old cat and has moved countries with me a fair few times. Music is a big part of my creative flow, although my singing is way better than my guitar playing



My fiancé's mother is also an artist and creates the most wonderful things, from wall paintings to these floral decorations. These were especially made for my birthday.

Most of these are replicas, but the rapier and the plastic bastard sword are the ones that I practise and duel with. An identical plastic bastard sword broke my nose a few weeks ago! Even though I've had surgery to fix it, I will henceforth always sport a crooked nose
I've got my webcam and microphone set up for my daily hangouts with art buddies, but also for my Twitch streams. The three screens have become a necessity. This top screen shows a sneak peak of the InDesign document of my novel
Here are some items that are of some importance in my book. Having real-world reference of them is incredibly handy and inspiring to keep around.



These maps were handpainted by Francesca Baerald, an awesome traditional artist based in Italy. They are the world and city map for my Caldyra novel. I love the old look and feel she's managed to replicate, as if they're real maps made a few centuries ago

also why I have a few pieces of gym equipment in my home office.

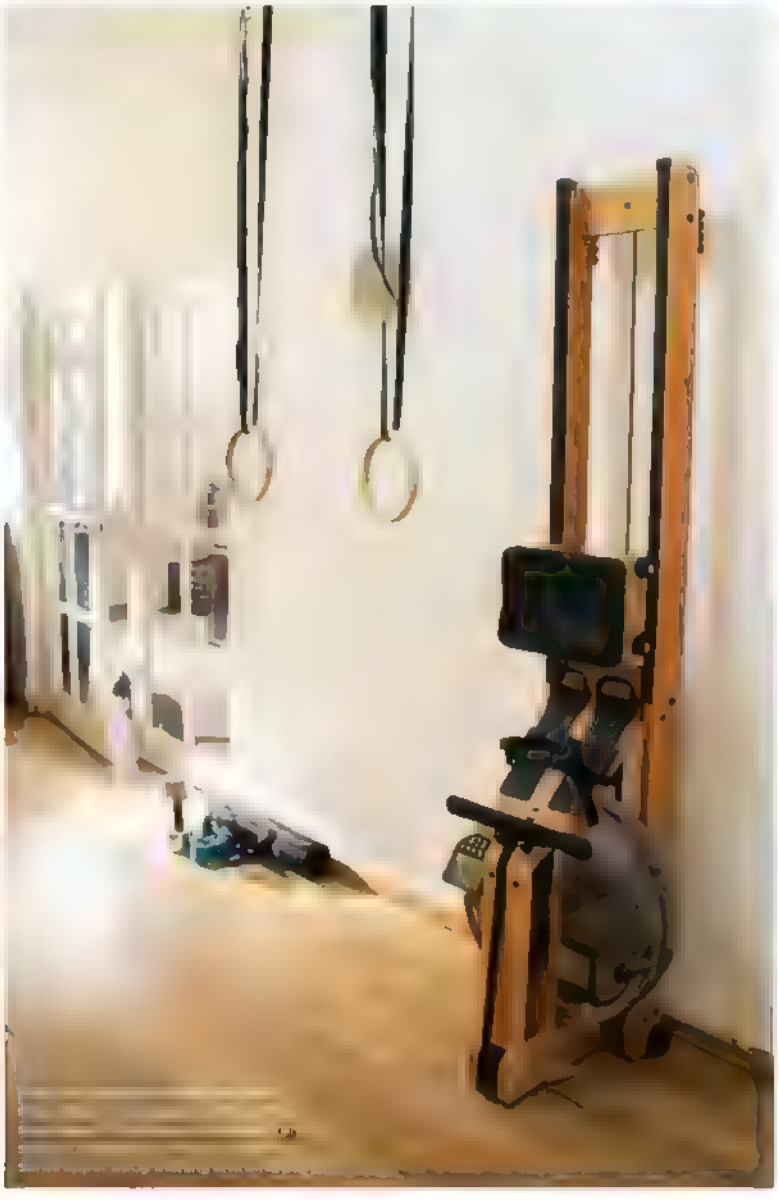
As well as my freelance concept art and illustration work, I have my own illustrated novel series in the making called Caldyra. Whenever I find weapons or items (sometimes even just fabrics) that match my story, I purchase them as reference.

The writer in me firmly believes that we should write or draw what we know. I'm aware I can never be an evil wizard, a wild beast or weary soldier, but knowing how to hold a sword and having hiked through some rough mountains really helps to give my ideas a real-world grounding.

Working from home can turn you into a hermit – otherwise known as a greasy-haired pyjama monster! To avoid that, I spend my days hanging out with artist friends while we work, sharing each other's screens and talking over the mic. I've also got my fellow artist (and fiancé) just upstairs for the occasional hug or gut-wrenching criticism. Comparing this to my previous studio-based jobs proves that I get much more and better work done from my own little art den.

"Working from home can turn you into a hermit – otherwise known as a greasy-haired pyjama monster!"

Suzanne is an illustrator for Magic: the Gathering and Artifact, the newly announced card game for Dota. She created character concepts for Horizon Zero Dawn, and is also working on her own illustrated novel series called Caldyra. You can see more of her art at www.caldyra.com.



My Hanwei rapier has a green rubber tip to reduce the chance of hurting my friends at HEMA training. It also serves as a reference for the weapon of choice of Rotgar, who's one of my book's main characters

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

Issue 154
December 2017

Learn how to succeed in the animation industry: paint colourful characters, generate strong poses and silhouettes, vis dev advice and more. We talk to Pascal Campion, and help you escape from an art bubble!

Issue 153
November 2017

Discover how to paint distinctive characters. Case in point: Ramón Nuñez's arch-looking figure on the cover. Plus, sketch artists share their secrets, Greg Ruth on why he loves/hates the ballpoint pen, and clay sculpting advice.

Issue 152
October 2017

Break into the concept art industry with the help of our pro artists who work in films and video games. We talk to Paul Scott Canavan, visit vis dev powerhouse Volta, and see how artists are preventing art theft.

Issue 151
September 2017

Raise your illustration game with the help of cover artist Tran Nguyen. Emily Hare passes on her creature design tips, Anna Hollinrake's workshop tackles colour and storytelling, and we talk methods of beating stress.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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Tree of knowledge

I subscribed two months ago after I found a copy of ImagineFX while taking traditional and digital painting classes, and I'm pleasantly surprised by everything I find in the magazine. I'm planning to study 3D modelling at university in Montreal, and I'm slowly putting together a portfolio between my work shifts for my admission in March 2018. Reading and looking at the great work from artists around the world has given me so many fantastic ideas, so I want to thank you for all the excellent articles you produce.

I'm sending you Merlin, my most recent digital painting. It depicts a magical tree that grows whatever its surroundings. The tree is protected by a temple and because it holds great knowledge and wisdom, only the most powerful mages know of its location.
Catherine Morin-Laporte, Canada

New reader Catherine's original take on the tree of knowledge. She plans to study 3D art at university next year.

Claire replies Thanks so much for sending in your work, Catherine. The detailing on the leaves – all highlighted from the light source above – is fantastic. I wish you all the best for your application to university. It's great that you're already planning to work towards your goal – it's a good sign of your enthusiasm and work ethic. Please keep us informed of your progress.

Where to start?

I bought my first issue of ImagineFX (issue 153) and was amazed by the artwork the artists had created. I'm new to digital art and would like to know what software would be best for a beginner like myself? In addition, I was wondering if I should buy a Mac or Windows computer, or doesn't it make a difference for the software? Any help would be fantastic.
Daniel O'Mara, via email

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit http://ifxm.ag/154-ifx for details.

While Photoshop was used to create these images, there are plenty of alternative painting programs available.

Claire replies Daniel, answering this email is a little tricky because these are big questions! What you buy will depend on your budget and personal preference. I don't think a Mac or PC will make a difference, but the industry standard for many professional artists is a Mac, which costs a lot more than an equivalent-spec PC. As for software, there are many affordable options to start with. You could use a free 3D building program called SketchUp or check out 2D options ArtRage or Rebelle, before you sign up for a costly monthly subscription to the industry standard software, which is Photoshop. If you have an iPad, I'd recommend Procreate. I wish you the best on your journey of exploration into digital art.

Take a tablet or two

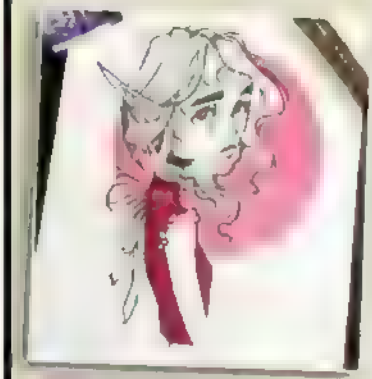
First off, I'd like to say thank you for providing such an amazing magazine. I may be an amateur artist, but looking at all the beautiful work created is so inspiring, and even though I can't fully appreciate all the tutorials, they always get me thinking.

I was wondering – and apologies if this was done before and I missed it – if it's possible to run a series of articles for drawing tablets aimed at beginners? From selecting an appropriate tablet, to choosing software and how to go from there. I'd love to get into it, but all the options make it a little daunting!
Ashley Morris, England

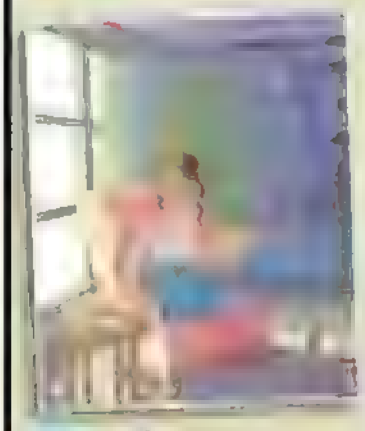
Claire replies Hello Ashley, I love that our magazine gets you thinking! We've compared a few drawing tablets in the past, but that was a little while back. When a new tablet gets released, I'll see if I can do a round-up of other offerings at different price points for you.

FRESH PAINT

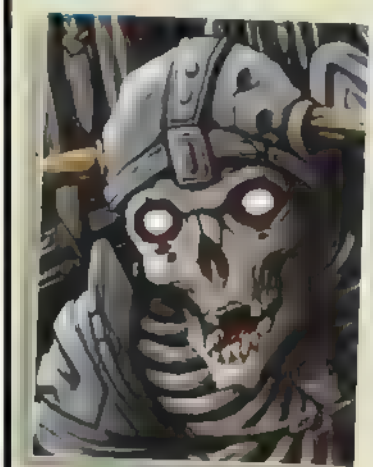
New works that have grabbed our attention



Małgorzata Kmieć
@mkmiec.art



Lindsey Deets
@LindseyDeets



Brettsch Windt
@brettschwindt

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Artist Q&A

STRUGGLING WITH A PAINTING TECHNIQUE OR TOPIC? EMAIL **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM** TODAY!

The ImagineFX panel

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

John Petersen

John studied biological illustration and is now an animator and technical illustrator for Engineering Systems, Inc., and a freelance illustrator for tabletop game companies.
www.petersenart.com

Chris Rathbone

Chris is a vector-based artist who specialises in sport and comic book illustration. He's worked with Sky Sports, NBC Sports, and many personalities within the motorsport industry.
www.chrisrathbone.com

Artist Q&A
Need our advice?
Email **help@imaginefx.com** with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

Question

Any ideas for boosting the lighting and focal point of an image?

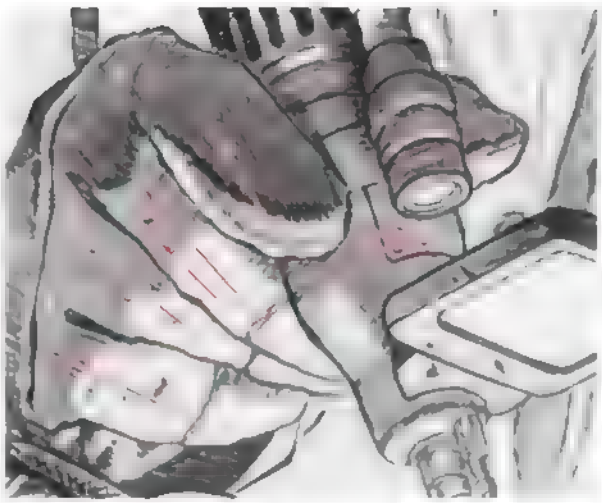
Rodney Hallem, England

Answer

John replies

Using elements of your pencil underdrawing is a great way to capture the viewer's attention within a piece. Furthermore, your pencil lines can emphasise light sources in the scene. Even when I create a digital piece I usually tend to start out with traditional media such as pencils. I like the feeling of textured paper as I make my marks, and it also means I have an original piece of process art that I'm able to sell. Simulated texture in a digital art program is all well and good, but there's nothing quite like the feel of pencil on cold press board or watercolour paper.

My philosophy lately has become one of focus on draftsmanship. The more time I spend on working up a detailed drawing, the less I'll have to paint over it later. Colouring becomes a breeze, because the values and texture are already there, but more importantly I'm able to switch the colour theme with minimal effort. Red/yellow colour scheme too aggressive? I can work up a blue/green environment in just a few minutes. The main takeaway, however, is to let the paper texture and pencil lines guide your eye to where you need it.



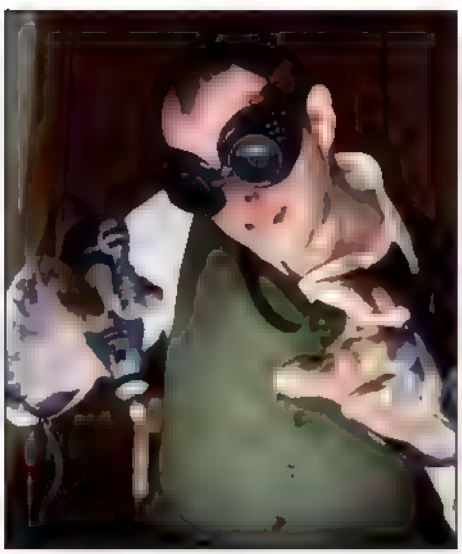
Sometimes it's good to mix it up a little bit. I use contour lines that follow the curve of the main body of the welding device

Artist's secret

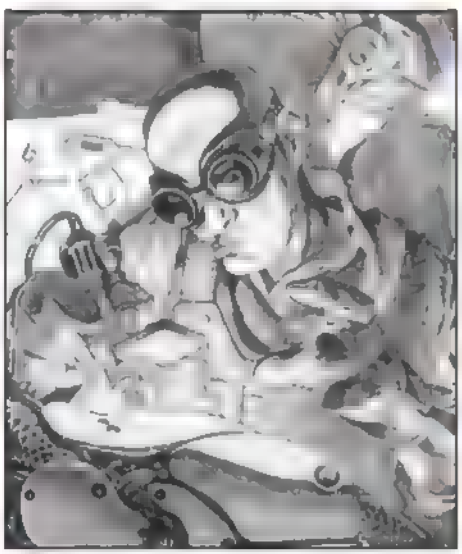
Special rulers are your friend

Clip Studio Paint has a powerful set of guides that help you create pencil or brush strokes perfectly aligned to a variety of shapes. Use the Focus Line ruler to generate additional shading lines that radiate from a single point

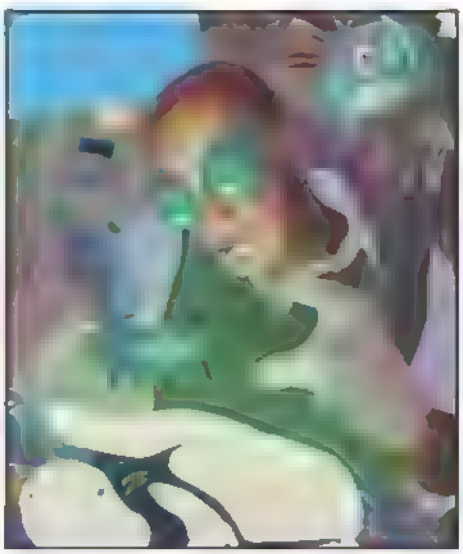
Step-by-step: Use shading and values to emphasise the focal point



1 My best work always happens when I have a good reference for clothing, materials and lighting. I set up a shot in my studio with a light source that'll be radiating from the focal point. I wear funky goggles and work gloves, and kit-bash a welding gizmo for added authenticity.



2 The detailed pencil drawing is where it's at. I generate almost all of my shading and value work by aligning pencil strokes to the light source. I really take my time and concentrate on unifying the drawing. I'll add some refinements in Clip Studio Paint after I scan the drawing.



3 I use Clip Studio Paint to add colour and other drawing refinements. There's not much detail in this layer that's in the drawing; just a lot of simple colour shapes and gradients. This stage is a lot of fun because you can experiment with colour schemes without too much effort.

Capturing and exaggerating movement can give a dynamic look to your illustrations and help to inject a sense of speed and direction.

Question
Help me capture motion in an image

Ruth Dalish, US

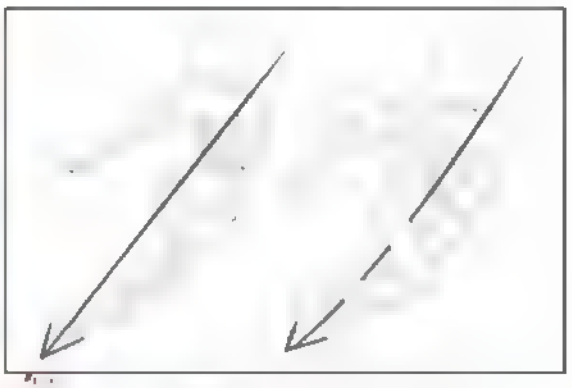
Answer
Chris replies

Before starting your drawing it's important to decide what type of movement you want to capture. Try to keep it simple and dynamic so you can emphasise it, rather than have a composition with lots of different angles and directions, which can be busy on the eye.

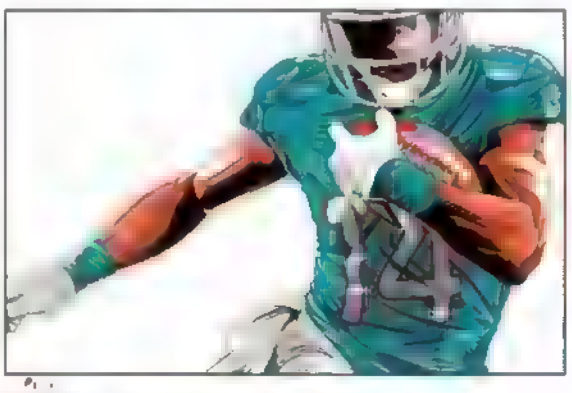
Once you've decided on the main movement for your composition you can then start to flesh out the illustration and add smaller, more local areas of movement if it adds and supports the main movement. I always prefer to keep the angles and direction of movement to a minimum, which means I can then exaggerate it to make the image as dynamic as possible.

It's also important to not only think about the movement of the character or object, but also how that movement might affect the surroundings. This will help your image to feel more 'real'

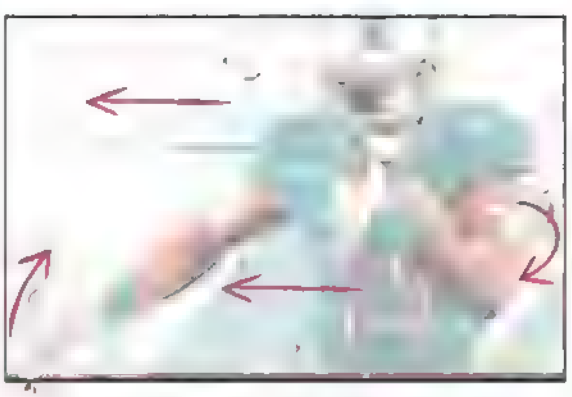
Step-by-step: Creating dynamic movement in a composition



1 Sketch out different ideas for angles and movements to see which one will give you the most exciting composition. You want to find a balance between a natural-looking pose, but also an exaggerated one to make it as dynamic as possible.



2 Once you've got your pose and angle of movement, flesh out your character or object. Think about how the surroundings will be affected by the movement. Here, the character's clothing needs to reflect the chosen angle of movement.



3 To really exaggerate the movement, I like to extend some of the co ours and details to create lines of movement. This gives a real sense of speed and direction of travel, which all adds to the movement that we're trying to capture.

Question
How can I draw a character in an environment without reference?

Dawn Ng, Canada

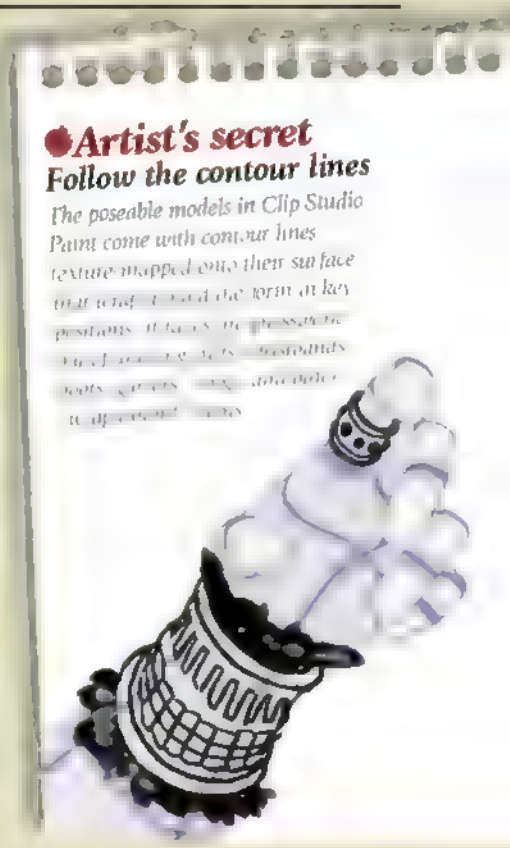
Answer
John replies

Always use a real-life reference if you can, but if you can't, Clip Studio Paint has some wonderful tools that enable artists to craft entire environments in accurate perspective, and characters with correct proportions, all without the need for setting up a complex photo shoot.

The Perspective Ruler gives you the ability to draw perfectly straight lines in three-point perspective, so you can be sure your environment follows those visual rules. Clip Studio Paint also comes with 3D male and female Drawing Dolls that can be shaped and manipulated into any pose or body type you need. The workflow consists of establishing your perspective grid, importing three-dimensional figures into the scene, and drawing right over the top of everything, without having to do endless thumbnails.

The wonderful thing about drawing in the perspective grid is that your line direction will snap to and stay perfectly aligned with one of the three planes (based on the direction of your pen stroke) while enabling you to vary pen pressure on your tablet to achieve a nice variation in your line thickness.

Figures are seamlessly integrated, with accurate perspective and foreshortening. The Perspective Ruler and Drawing Dolls in CSP make it easy to quickly compose a scene.

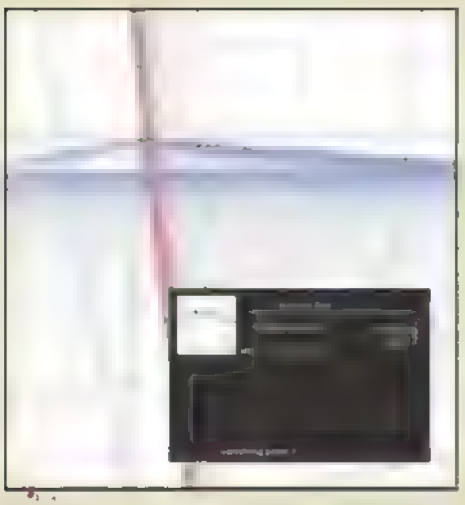


Artist's secret

Follow the contour lines

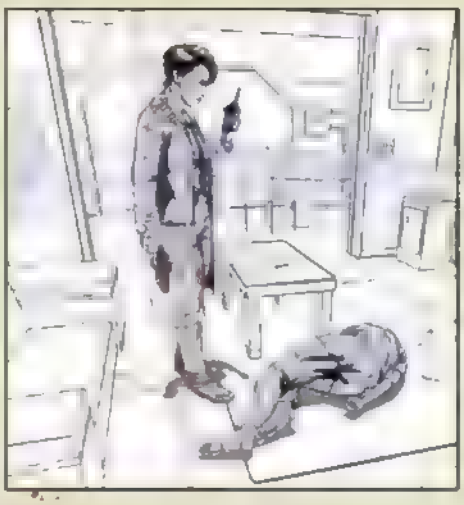
The poseable models in Clip Studio Paint come with contour lines texture-mapped onto their surface that wrap around the form in key positions. Where the pose of the [illegible] bends, [illegible] bends, [illegible] and [illegible] to different [illegible]

Step-by-step: Eliminate the guesswork from your composition



1 Start by establishing your three-point perspective. In Clip Studio Paint, select Layer>Ruler - Frame>Create Perspective Ruler... and choose three-point perspective. With the Operation/ Object tool you can adjust your vanishing points and horizon line.

2 Select Window>Material>Material [3D], and under the 3D tab select Body Type. Drag either the male or female drawing doll onto the canvas. The model should enter the canvas oriented with your perspective gr d. You can move, rotate and pose the doll



3 Once you've got your scene set up, start blocking in your environment using the perspective grid. Create a new layer to start pencilling in your figures, using your 3D drawing dolls as a reference. Make use of Clip Studio Paint's Figure rulers to draw perfect ellipses.

Question
Any tips for creating a bold colour palette ideal for screen printing?

Lucy Randal, England

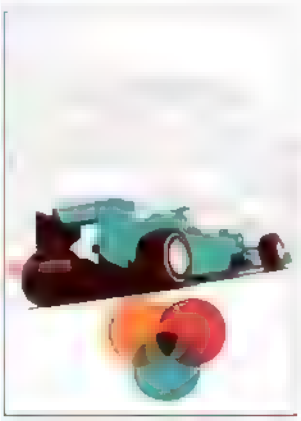
Answer
Chris replies

I love screen printing. All of my work is vector based and the art of screen printing really complements the vector style because it gives such a strong, bold and crisp printed finish, which enhances the style of vector illustration.

Even if you're not planning on having your work physically screen printed, you can still create a very stylised illustration using a minimal colour palette. Using a minimal colour palette enables you to pick three or four colours that really work in harmony with each other, and using a minimal colour palette isn't as restrictive as you might think.

Whether you're planing to screen print your work or not, you can use transparencies and opacities to create a much wider palette of colours, while still only having the core of your base colours. This means that your image can be much more interesting for the eye to look at, because the colours work well with each other. Furthermore, if you're planning to screen print your work, then using as few colours as possible helps to reduce the cost. Something all artists working to a budget should bear in mind!

By using a minimal colour palette you can create bold and stylised illustrations. This is a great way to complement digital work for all you vector artists out there!

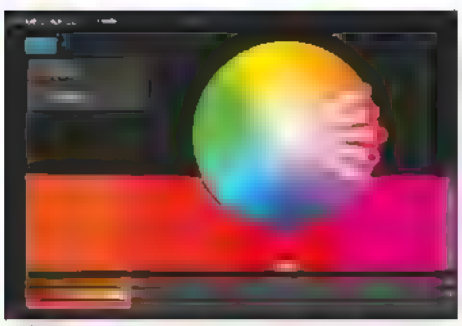


Limiting your colour palette in an illustration can help you to create a feel for an image. Using colour harmonies (as shown above) can enhance the feel or emotion of an illustration

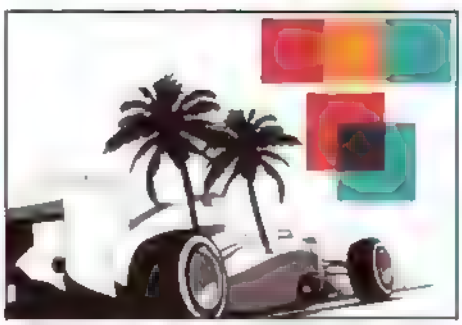
Artist's secret
Avoid using black

I try to never use black in any of my work because I find it's harsh on the eye. Instead I like to pick a dark red, dark blue or brown for example which still gives the sharp outlines you need, but is then tonally softer and more in keeping with your image

Step-by-step: Don't be limited by a limited palette

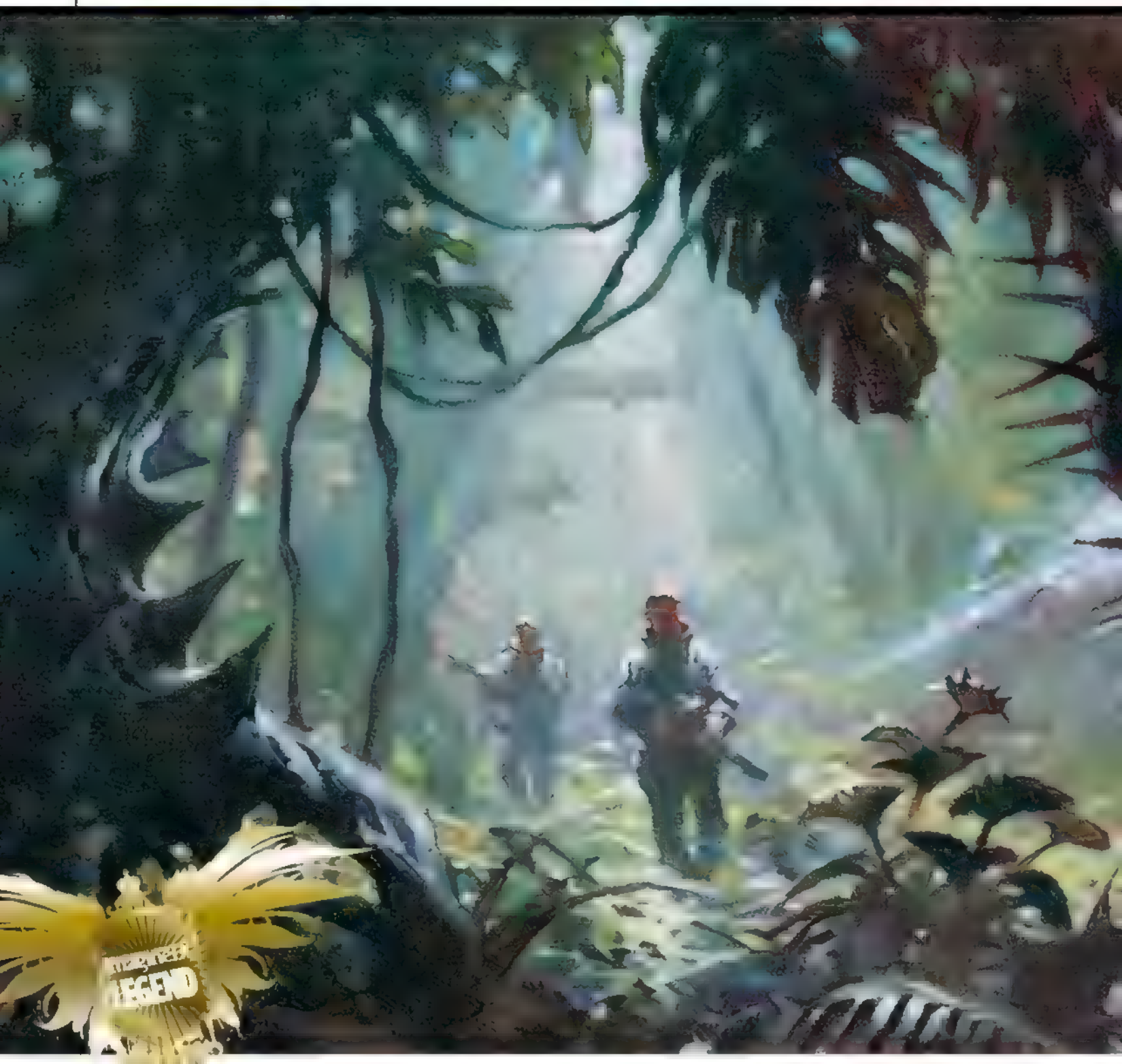


1 If you haven't used it before, Adobe's Kuler (**http://ifxm.ag/kuler-colour**) is an awesome tool. It's a colour scheme generator that enables you to create colour themes using your smart phone or browser. You can then save these themes and use them in Illustrator or Photoshop.



2 Limiting your colour palette to somewhere around two to four complementary colours will give you much more scope than you realise. I went for three colours for this retro Formula One poster, and overlapping the colours can give you even more colours to play with.

3 You can use half-tones and overprint colours to create a stylised look to your illustrations, and this also means that you can combine your core colours to create other colours. Just look at all the colours and tones that are made by mixing the red and teal!



Gregory Manchess

For this award-winning illustrator, painting is all about creating an emotional connection with the viewer, discovers **Nick Carson**

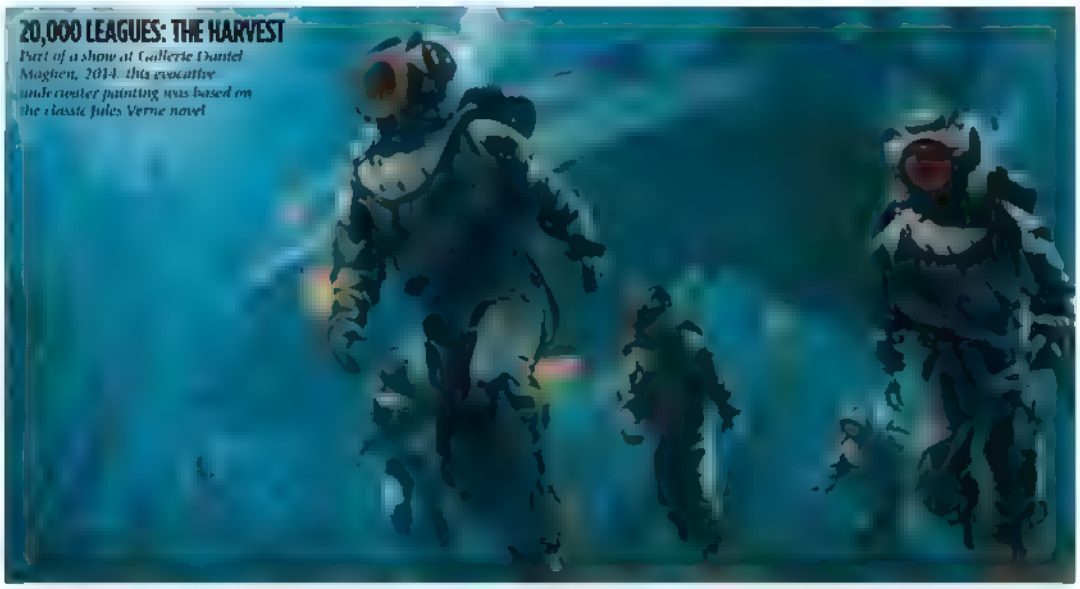
Gregory Manchess started his career as a studio-based illustrator, which instilled versatility by necessity: "We needed to be accomplished at whatever was put in front of us," he says. "I've worked in watercolour, pastels, acrylics, airbrush, gouache.... The style and concepts are my own, the medium is merely the transfer process."

He has a particular flair for figurative work, treading the line between compelling realism and stylised, painterly technique. Ultimately, he says, the better your understanding of the human form as an artist, the easier it is to express it in an understated way.

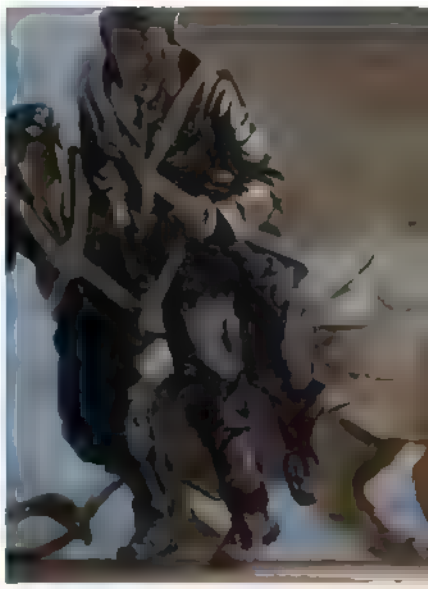
"Accuracy isn't necessarily important, as long as the expression of the form succeeds in describing it to the ▸▸

THE SKY PEOPLE

"I made about 20 different sketches for this piece. The story takes place on Venus and has dinosaurs, saber-toothed cats, wrecked ships, jungles and bizarre flora."



20,000 LEAGUES: THE HARVEST
Part of a show at Galleria Daniel Maghen, 2014, this evocative underwater painting was based on the classic Jules Verne novel



viewer," says Gregory. "Once one has learned a lot about capturing a figure well, it's much easier and fascinating to push and pull the expression to depict a feeling."

Creating that meaningful emotional connection with the viewer is critical to his work: a simple goal that, the artist admits, has taken decades to master. "A painting is a still moment, but a perception of movement creates curiosity in the viewer's mind, and can hold them in that moment," Gregory says. "And the viewer brings their own information to the canvas."

As viewers, familiarity with different human postures, movements and expressions – drawn from our own life experiences – feed into that moment, and provide a visual shorthand to help us make that emotional connection.

HUMAN HISTORY

"Body language projects attitudes and emotions," adds Gregory. "It's like detecting danger in the environment around us. It's a primitive aspect that we've learned over thousands of years. If we know how these things work for the brain, we can use them to engage the viewer."

While figurative work is his forte, he believes much of the skill of creating that all-important 'moment' comes down to the wider composition of the piece – creating tension across the canvas.

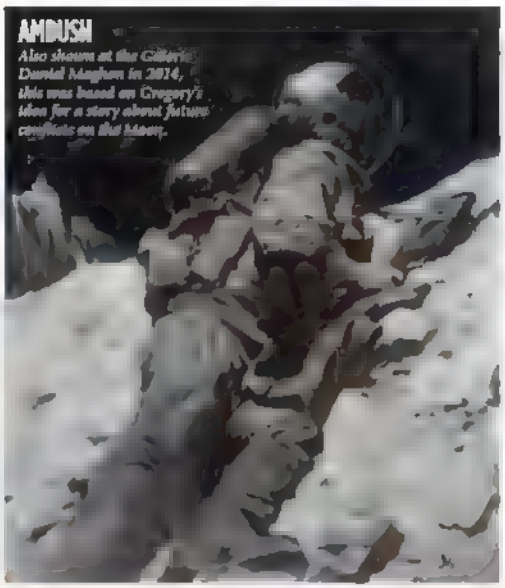
"This is achieved by careful study of how a frame is divided up: left to right, top to bottom, foreground to background," he explains. "An artist can tap into the basic knowledge of how a viewer looks at a painting. They already understand intuitively what visual space represents."

Clients such as the National Geographic Society and the History Channel have also enabled Gregory to indulge his love of history, and again it's a balancing act between accuracy and creative interpretation.

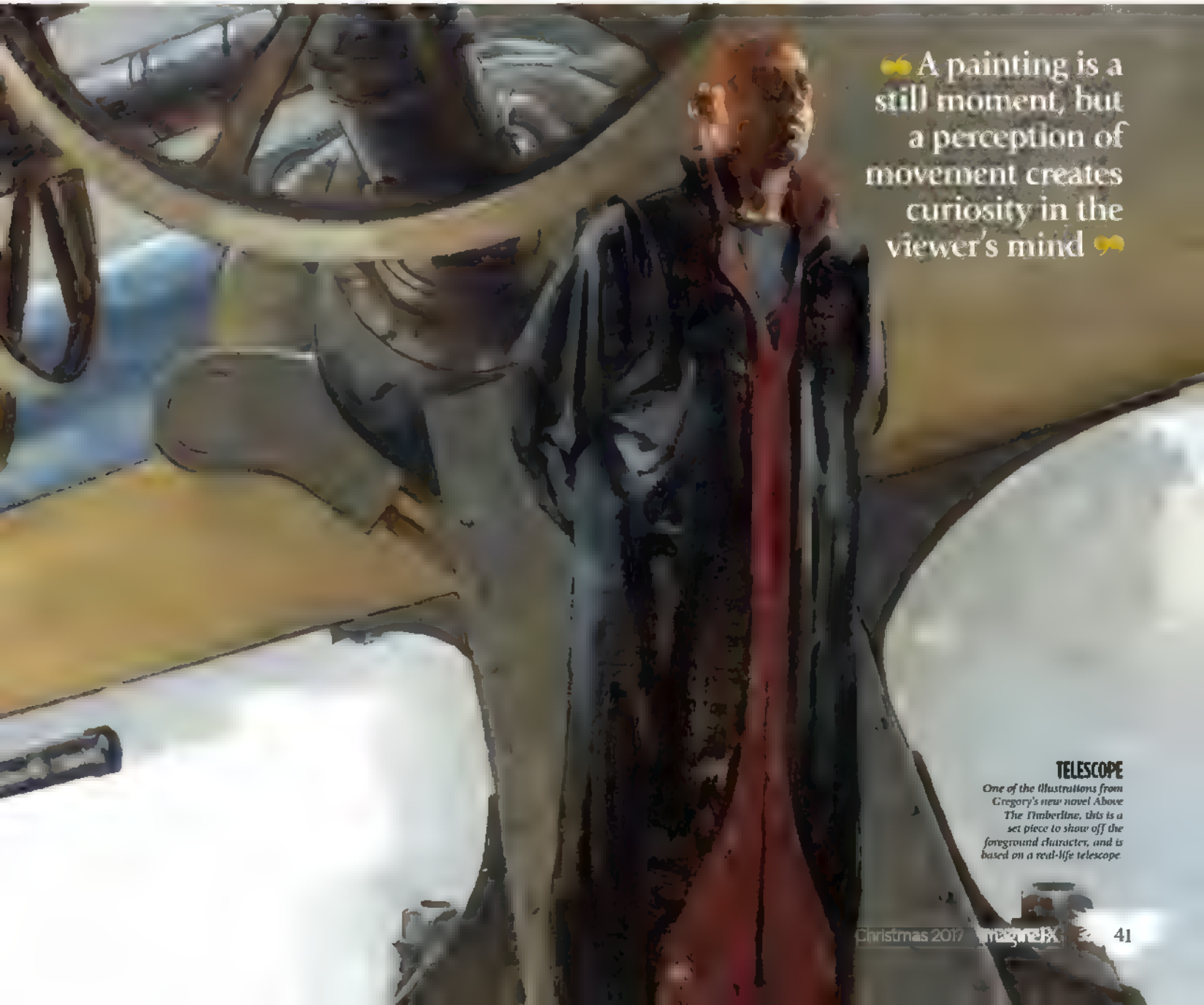
"Our job as

CAPTAIN MORGAN
"The client needed to revamp the painting of the Captain, and had seen my Nat Geographic work, but didn't know it was me," says Gregory.

FLIGHT LINE
"This is based on a story idea of mine, about a world where technology and mythology clash," explains Gregory. It was also part of the 2014 Galerie Daniel Maghen show.



AMBUSH
Also shown at the Galerie Daniel Maghen in 2014, this was based on Gregory's idea for a story about future conflicts on the Moon.



> A painting is a still moment, but a perception of movement creates curiosity in the viewer's mind

TELESCOPE
One of the illustrations from Gregory's new novel Above The Timberline, this is a set piece to show off the foreground character, and is based on a real-life telescope

MURAL MADNESS

Gregory had just eight weeks to draw and paint 10 pirate-themed murals...

Gregory picked his Pirates project as a portfolio highlight for three reasons: the dramatic subject matter, the reputation of the client, and the physical size of the work. It was a series of murals, painted for a National Geographic travelling exhibition.

The scenes depicted included slave capture, ship capture, a pirate battle, a ship in a storm, criminals on trial, and four full-figure portraits. "It was based on the fate of an actual pirate ship, discovered off Cape Cod," recalls the artist, who was inspired by the Golden Age illustrators of the 1930s.

The demands of the project were tough: 10 murals in eight weeks, each digitally enlarged to fill a 16x20-foot canvas. "I had no idea if I could paint large enough to have each piece blown up thousands of per cent to achieve a mural-like look," admits Gregory. "In eight weeks, it had to be sketched, approved, references gathered, painted and shot."

While the end result was a triumph – he hit the deadline several days early – Gregory recalls the whole process being a scheduling nightmare. "It demanded a strict sleeping, eating, research and painting schedule," he explains. "Up and eat by 8am, sketch 'til midday, wait for approvals while shooting reference, painting 'til late afternoon, one-hour break for dinner, paint 'til midnight, relax, repeat."

It paid off, of course. "I was extremely happy that I could paint dramatic scenes of people and ships I hadn't attempted before, keep everything accurate to National Geographic standards, and tell a story with dynamic composition," Gregory says.

DOOM
"This portrays the freak storm off the coast of Cape Cod in April 1717 that caused the Whydah to capsize, killing all but nine of her crew," says Gregory.

CAPTURE
"This is the moment Captain Black Sam Bellamy, commandeered the slave ship, Whydah, for his own pirate ship, and offered the slaves aboard to join his crew."

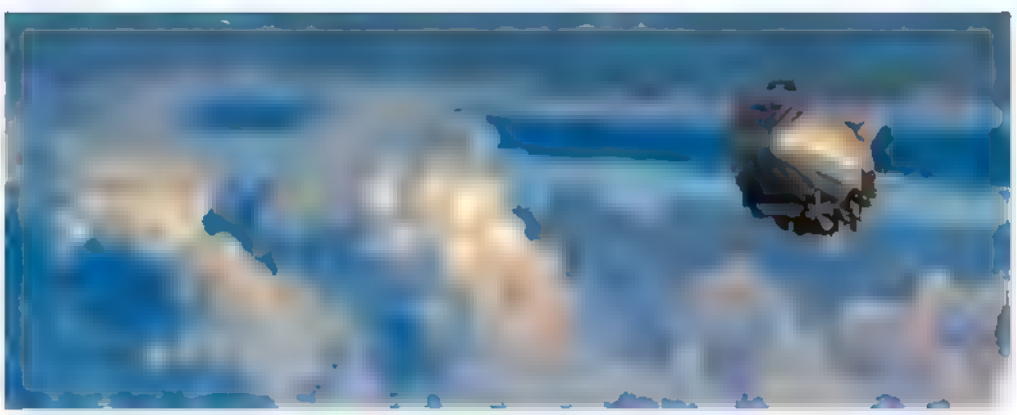
I was extremely happy that I could paint dramatic scenes of people and ships I hadn't attempted before

artists is to inspire in the viewer the curiosity to learn more; to hold them in the moment, and fascinate them. That goes beyond correct information. Accuracy is important, but is it more important to depict exactly how a costume looks, if the character wearing it doesn't inspire you? If all the rigging is correct in a ship painting, but the motion of the vessel fails to incite more study, then how compelling is that?"

He may love history, but for Gregory large swathes of the past decade have been dedicated to imagining an alternate future for Above The Timberline, his ambitious book set in a harsh, frozen landscape

PASSIVE POLAR BEARS

"I did a couple of thumbnails, picturing a guy heading up a mountain, and realised that he needed pack animals for his gear," Gregory recalls of the project that first gave him the idea. "Polar bears provided that, even though they would likely have eaten him. So that was the anomaly, and spark of curiosity that I required for the image."



AIRSHIP
Another illustration from Above The Timberline, this establishing shot was based on references of actual airships, but "slightly over-built", as Gregory puts it

Depicting just the right amount of tension in the scene was crucial. The bears were still ferocious wild animals, so it was important not to depict them as overly friendly or cuddly. "Once the painting was finished, it created so much curiosity that friends were practically demanding to know why I had painted it. Who is that guy? Where's he going? Why? So I sat down and drew a few more thumbnails, and then started to write."

Gregory initially worked on Above The Timberline for three years, sometimes daily. After attracting interest from a literary agent, it took another two years to sell the concept, then another two to refine and finish it. Staying focused throughout such an incredibly labour-extensive and demanding project required an incredible amount of self-discipline.

"Awake, eat, research, plan, sketch, paint, rest, eat, paint again, sleep," he chuckles. "Next day, all over again. When I started, I panicked and knocked out 49 pieces in three months. Two weeks later I stalled a

PURSUIT TO THE ARCTIC
Created for Smithsonian Magazine in 2008, this piece is based on a true story. "Detectives were trying to piece together the reason for the deaths of two explorers by an Inuit tribe," says Gregory.

ADAM
This portrait was part of [illegible] campaign in 2011. "A pharmaceutical company wanted to show how their drug could help sufferers of schizophrenia and borderline personality disorder."

MAKING FACES

Tasked with expressing mental illness through art, Gregory developed his loosest ever painting style...

For his Faces project, Gregory set himself a challenge: to paint as loosely as possible, while still depicting a recognisable face. "I had to paint faces of people experiencing bipolar and schizophrenia episodes, and achieve this feeling through the expression of the paint," he reveals.

"Inspiration came from the many abstract artists I love, and from spending decades moving paint around and knowing what I could get away with. Very fun." It wasn't all smooth sailing, however: the test painting Gregory created to win the commission, despite being one of his loosest pieces ever, just wasn't loose enough.

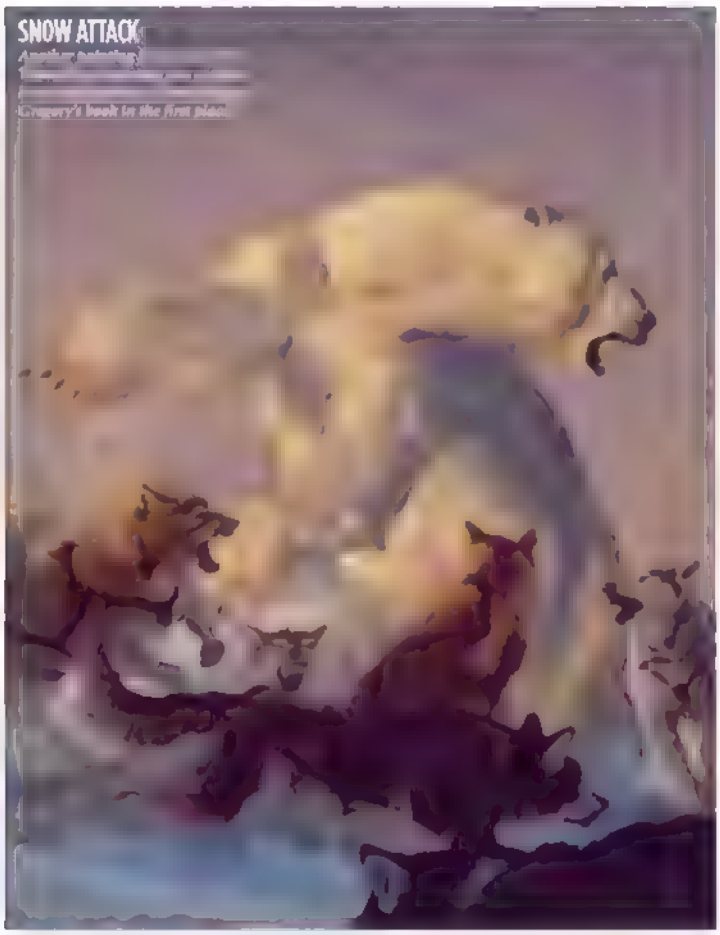
"I went back and forth for two more rounds, until they finally said, 'Maybe this just isn't for you,'" he recalls. "Oh yeah? Bang! I hit them with a frenzied piece, and they bought it. And then commissioned 23 more."

Maintaining such as loose and expressive style consistently across all 24 portraits was challenging, but Gregory found a methodical solution: "I kept a mental note of how I built the layers for the first few paintings, then repeated this with variations in colour," he explains. "Each piece came out differently, depending on the combination of palette knife versus brush usage."

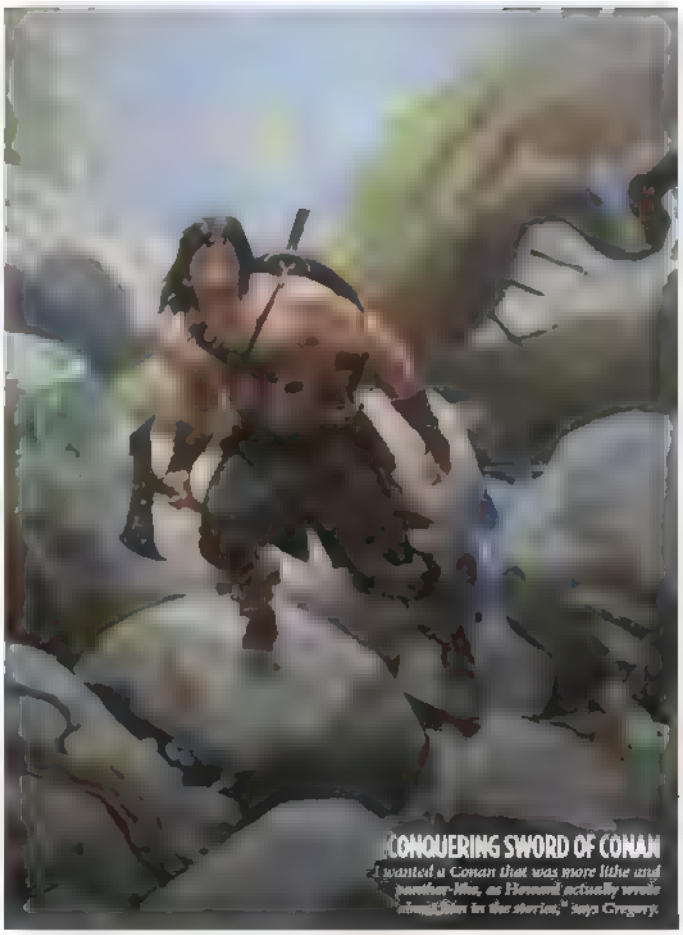
Despite almost missing out on the commission, Gregory's drive and determination turned it into a portfolio highlight, with one of the portraits going on to grace the cover of Communication Arts' Illustration Annual. "It also changed the way I approach painting now," the artist adds.

STAGES OF RESOLUTION 2

The [illegible] part of a [illegible] Vertigo [illegible] in Oakland, California in 2017. [illegible]



SNOW ATTACK
Another painting from Gregory's book in the first place.



CONQUERING SWORD OF CONAN
"I wanted a Conan that was more lithe and panther-like, as Howard actually wrote him/her in the stories," says Gregory.

> A beautiful mountain painting is suddenly graphically powerful when a swatch of snow graces one of its faces

bit, because I needed to focus on some complicated images."

Gregory's pace slowed, and the deadline looked worryingly close, so he tried a radical solution: working on 23 paintings at once. "They were pinned to the walls around me, and each day I chose which parts to finish," he recalls. "Feeling good about skies today? Pow! Knock out four of them. Reference prepared for these figures today? Wham! Punch out a dozen."

THE APPEAL OF SNOW

Snow has always fascinated him, and as Gregory hit the final intensive strait, it started finding its way into his dreams as well as his painting. "Snow looks different in different types of light, and it turns the environment into instant graphic appeal," he says. "A beautiful mountain painting is suddenly graphically powerful when a swatch of snow graces one of its faces."

Nevertheless, despite 124 paintings set in a snow-covered landscape, he very rarely painted it actually snowing. Again, the viewer's prior experience comes into play: "We understand different lighting conditions: overcast clouds about to rain, or snow; sunlight after the rain. If we can capture those lighting conditions in the paint, then the viewer feels it."

All the paintings began life as tiny rectangular sketches on a piece of bond paper, with a visual through line. "It was like stacking panels from a graphic novel, but aligned horizontally across the page," he explains. "From there came dialogue and character. Rearrange images, more dialogue, less description; drawing for impact; capturing a moment; driving a narrative visually... I loved the process of building it."

For Gregory, the discipline of repetition was an invaluable tool for developing his technique, and it's something he'd recommend to any fellow artist. "I learned so much about how I build an image," he says. "Repeating a process over 124 paintings can bring realisation rushing to mind about how one works."

And he concludes: "There's a difference between that and simple practice. Practice is just repeating, focused repetition is growth."

ABOVE THE TIMBERLINE (COVER)
More than seven years in the making, Gregory's labour of love was finally released in October 2017, and features a staggering 124 full-colour paintings.

Jake Parker

PROFILE

Jake Parker
LOCATION: US

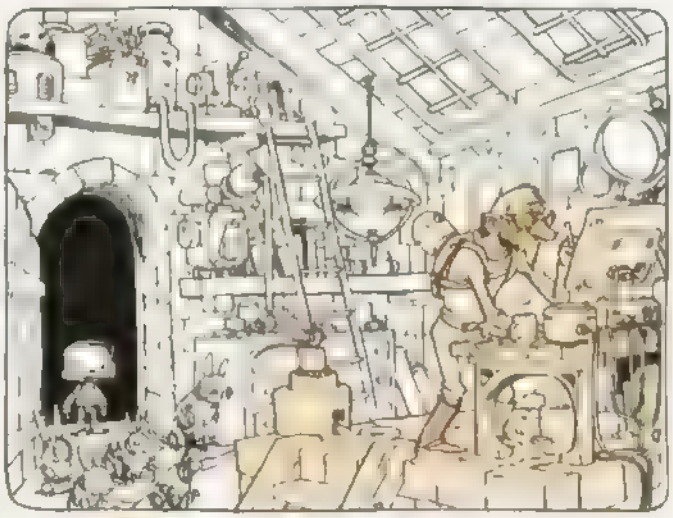
Perhaps best known as the creator of the month-long art challenge, Inktober, Jake has worked in animation, video games, comic books and children's books. He was the artist on Rocket Raccoon for Marvel comics, the creator of the Missile Mouse graphic novel series, and is currently working on SkyHeart, his latest graphic novel.
www.mrjakeparker.com

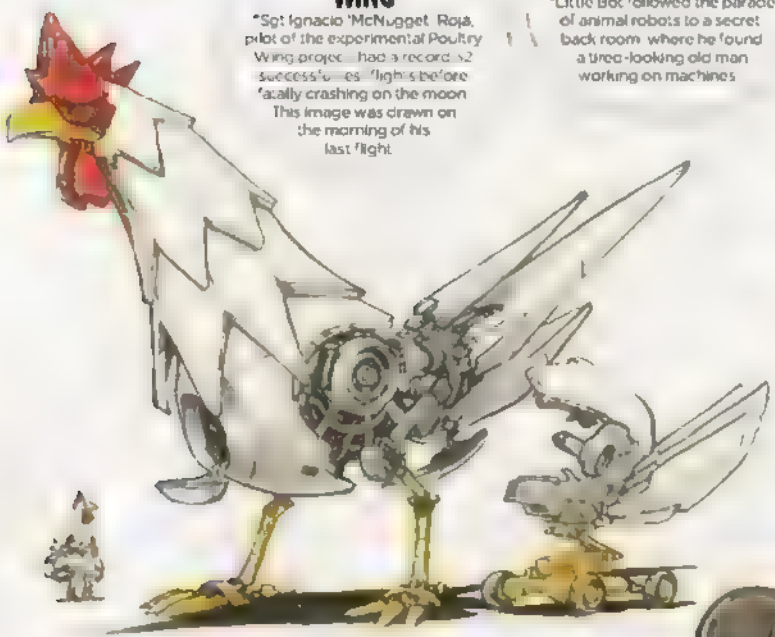
POULTRY WING

"Sgt Ignacio 'McNugget' Roja, pilot of the experimental Poultry Wing project, had a record 52 successful flights before fatally crashing on the moon. This image was drawn on the morning of his last flight."

INKTOBER DAY 25: TIRED

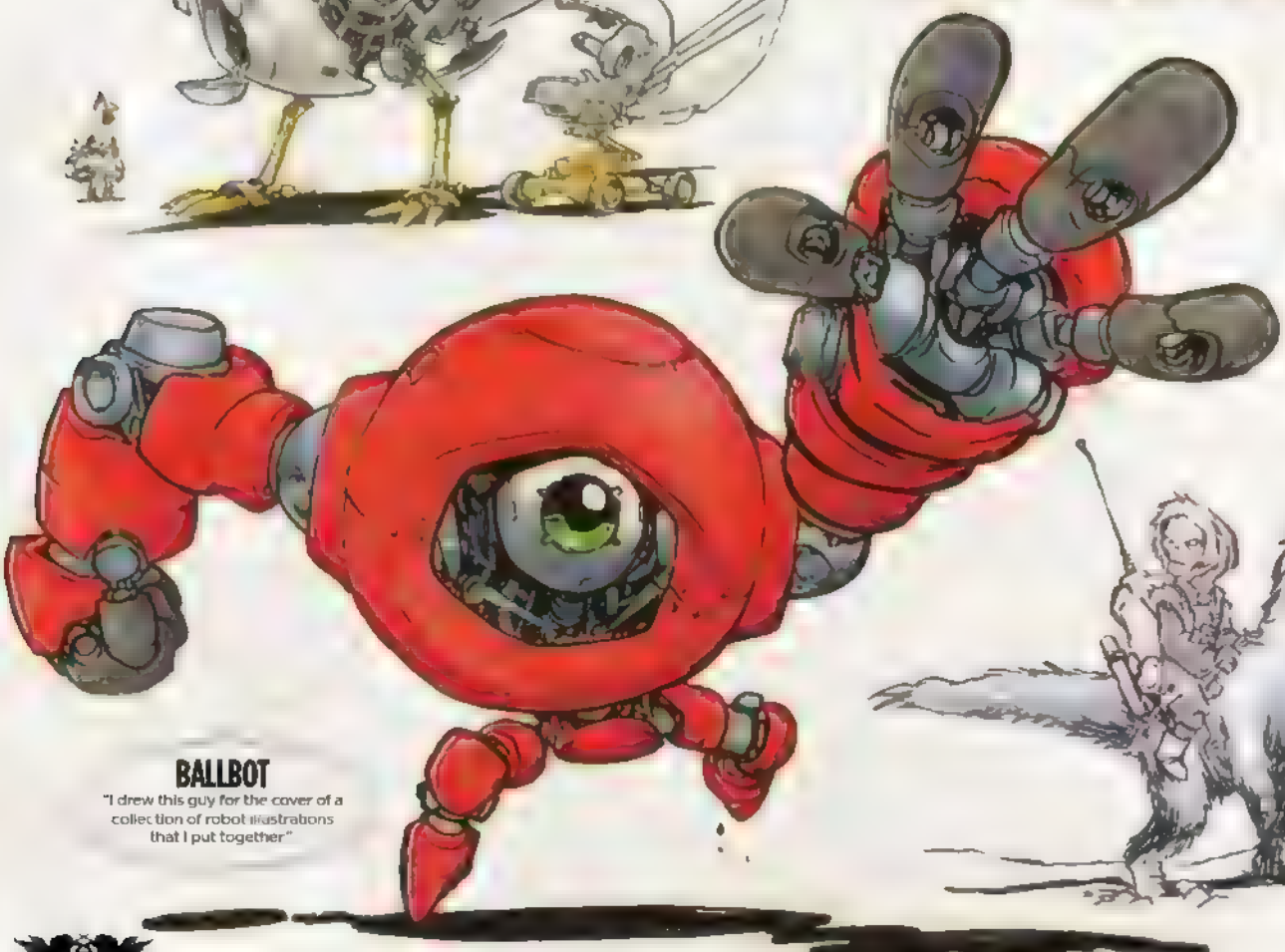
"Little Bot followed the parade of animal robots to a secret back room where he found a tired-looking old man working on machines."





CYATH KRI

Stranded on Earth in the late Cretaceous period, he searches for a suitable mountain top to construct a quantum beacon.

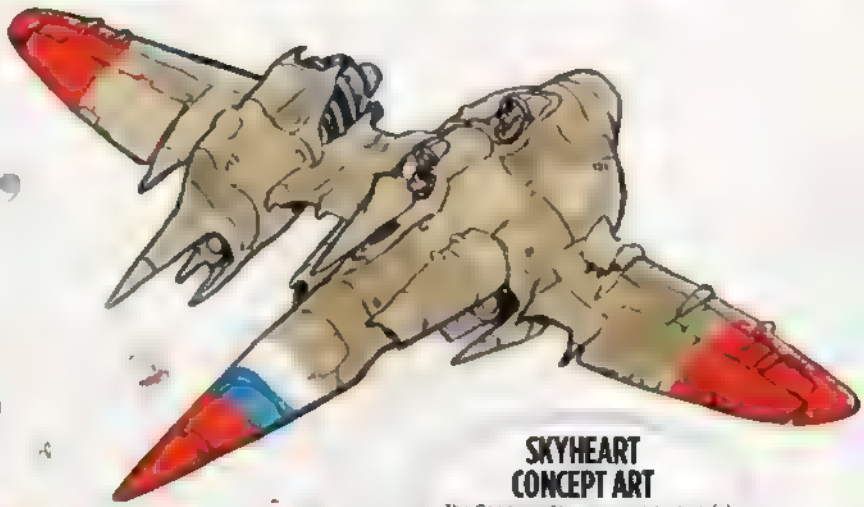


BALLBOT

"I drew this guy for the cover of a collection of robot illustrations that I put together."

CRAB MECH
Cephalopodian's are pretty meticulous with their crab mech maintenance routines.'

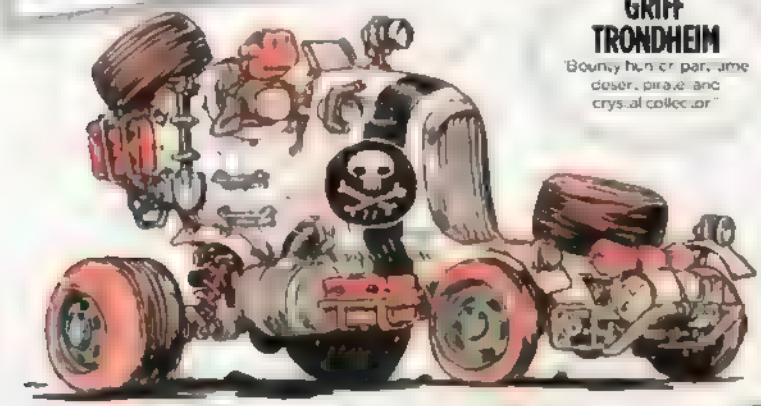
> Little Bot found a tired-looking old man, working on machines



SKYHEART CONCEPT ART
The Caponian Skycross was a powerful pursuit fighter designed and manufactured by the Barnis'a family

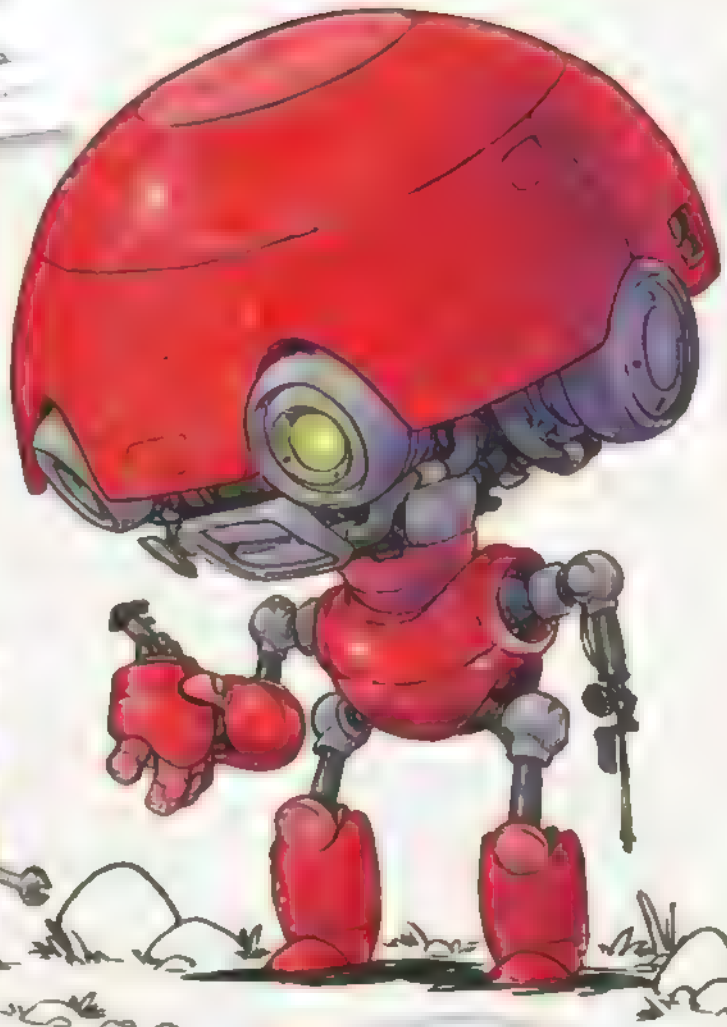
PROFESSOR NELSON
"Every summer Professor Nelson would roam Mongolia studying the flies

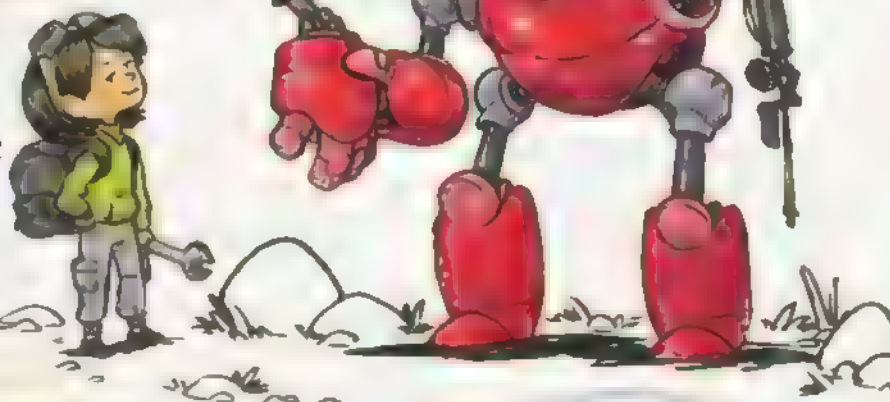
Sketchbook



GRIFF TRONDHEIM

"Bounty hunter part-time desert pirate and crystal collector"

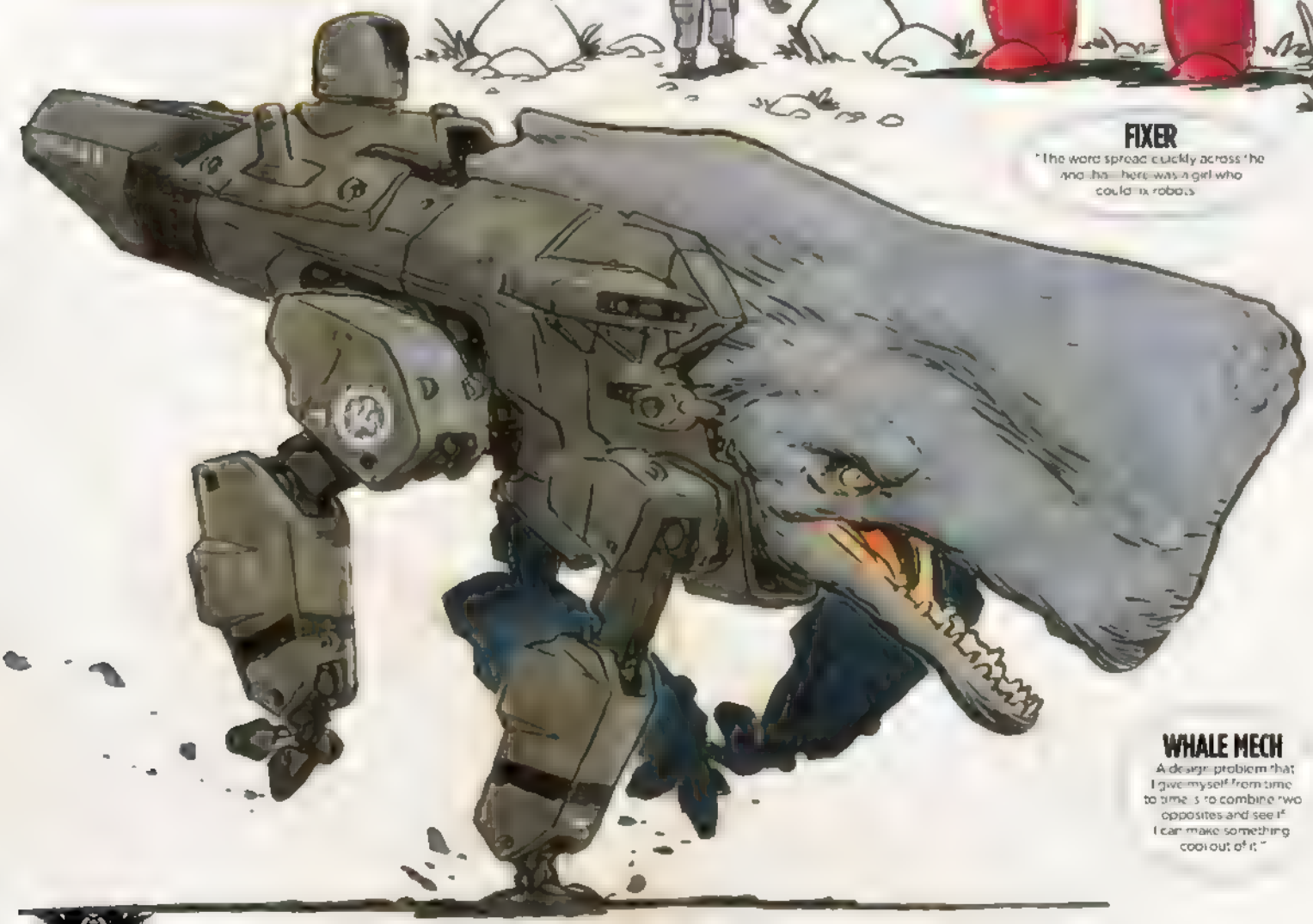




> I ask myself to combine two opposites and see if I can make something cool out of it

FIXER

"The word spread quickly across the land – there was a girl who could fix robots"



WHALE MECH

"A design problem that I give myself from time to time: is to combine two opposites and see if I can make something cool out of it"

THE CAT IN THE HAT ON A TROT BOT
"I drew this to honour Dr. Seuss' birthday one year."

THE TERRIBLE GRIZZLY-BOT! AND RO-BEAR
"There was some horrible sort of mix-up when a bear got into the robot factory."

BOOSTED SPEEDER
Tried to fuse with a bird head into a ship design.

Sketchbook

I was bored of drawing robots from the front and so I tried a back view

SKYHEART SHIP CONCEPT

"When you only have one shot. MAKE IT COUNT!"

ROBO-RIDER BLUE

"If there's a theme that keeps popping up in my drawings it's things riding things. This design was partially inspired by a motorcycle

ALTERNATE HISTORY

"One hundred years ago at Verdun the Bolivians counter-attacked against the Germans and reached Paris. Thanks to advancements in both mechanised armoured transport and saurian mind control

KNIGHT OWL

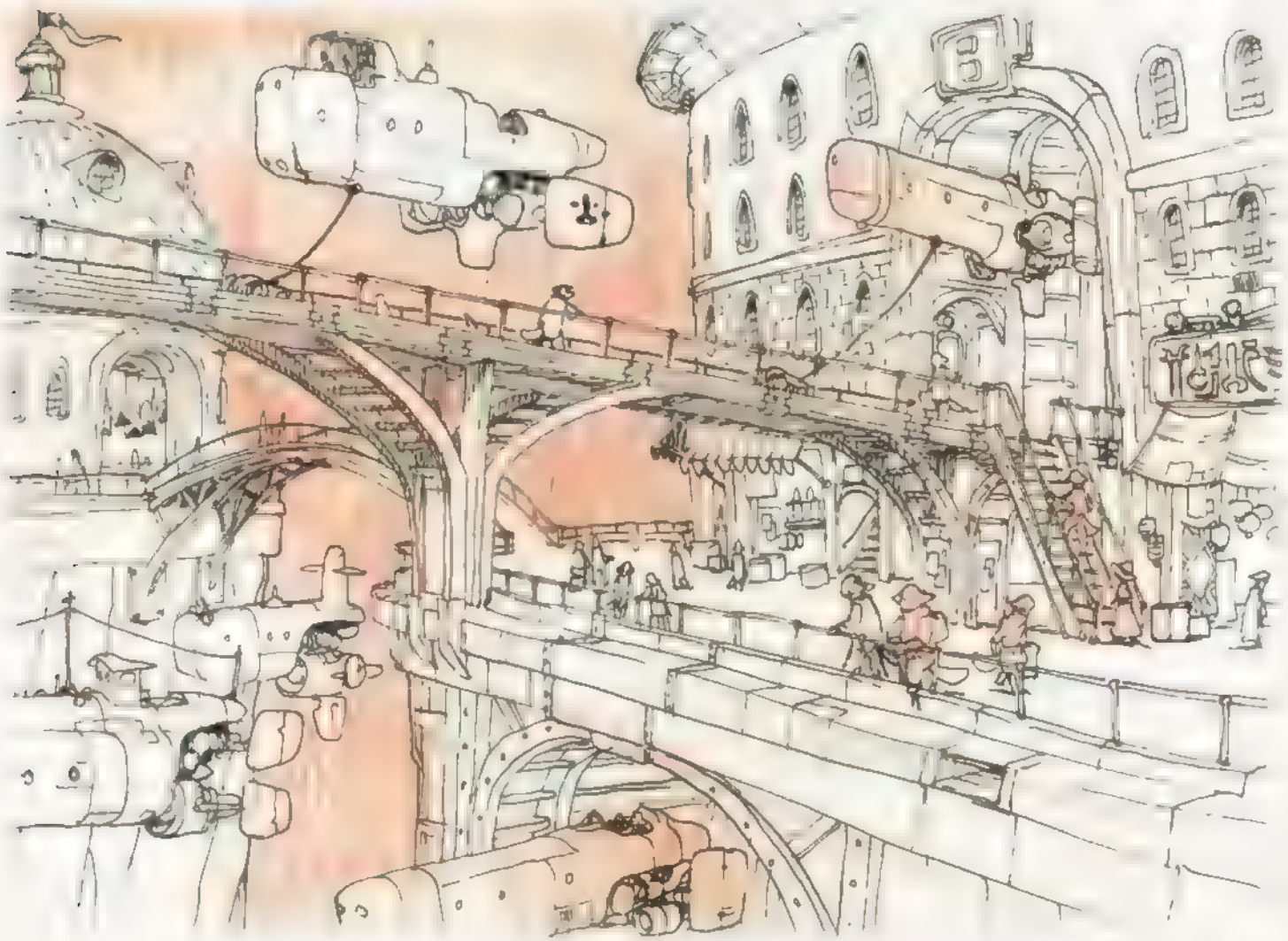
"I created this as a simple background character but people kept asking me to draw him more. The cutaway was done to answer the question: Is he a robot or is he wearing a suit?"

BRIDGEPORT SKETCH

"A busy Monday morning in Bridgeport. The citizens are off to work, the market and the ship yards in one of the busier cities in my SkyHeart comic."

PANELLED BOT

"This was just a warm-up drawing I did one morning. I was bored of drawing robots from the front. So I need a back view."



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Oksana Kerro

PROFILE

Oksana Kerro
LOCATION: Russia

This artist has loved nature since childhood and often takes walks in the forests for inspiration. She paints digitally as a concept artist and illustrator in the video games industry, but also likes using traditional media. The portability of a sketchbook and pencil is especially appealing to Oksana.
www.artstation.com/kueshka

BUTTERFLY

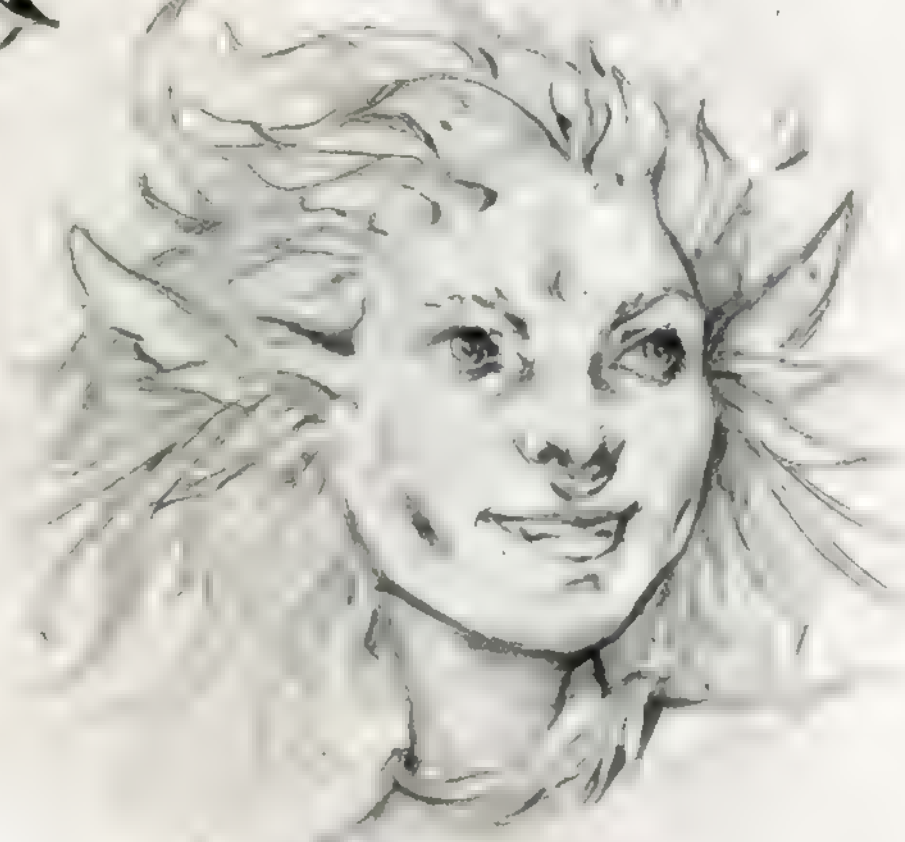
"I drew this sketch for Inktober 2016. This elegant lady knows how to handle a sword, but loves the beautiful butterflies too."

THE STOLEN BOOK

"I wanted to draw a crazy pixie, but it turned out to be a peaceful little man, quite friendly. He's stolen a book and has hid himself in the grass, gazing with rapture at the scribbles and beautiful pictures."

SMILE

"I really love plants and often draw strange people with leaves on their heads. But I like this sketch for reminding me of summer days, full of sunlight."



RETURNING

"This creature is like the avatar of the forest, its soul. She pulls the memories and pain from human bones, which will become part of the land. I'd like people to remember that they're part of something more, something bigger."

DRUID

"Despite his frightening appearance this guy is kind and gentle. He's a witch doctor who lives in the forest, collecting herbs and cooking medicinal broths with them."

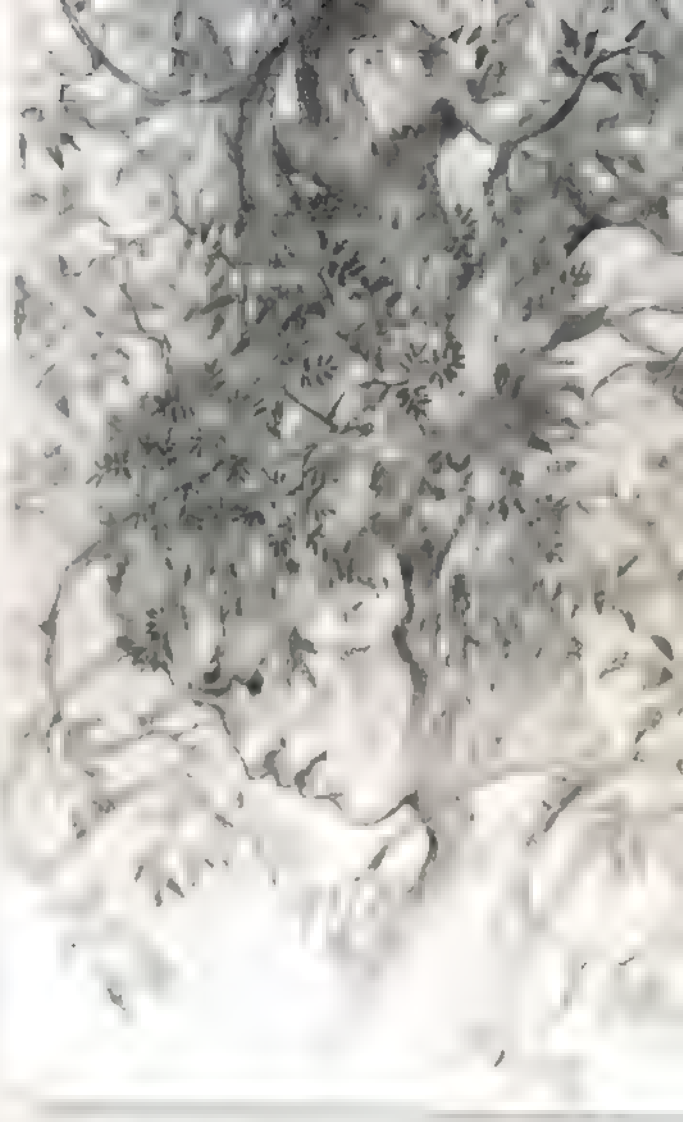
TROLLKILLER

"At first, I wanted to paint a sleeping troll, but suddenly the plot of the picture changed when I added the outline of this little fragile girl. Sorry, troll, but she turned out to be more sly and cleverer than you."

I'd like people to remember that they're part of something more, something bigger

Sketchbook

> I love dragons very much and often draw these flying beasts



SUMMER

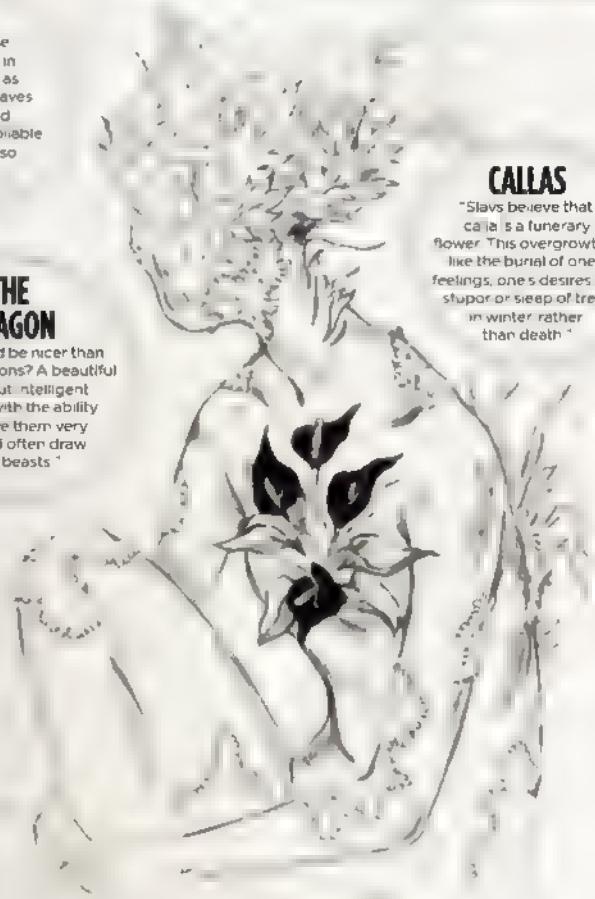
" often draw humanised plants or animals saw beautiful spikelets filled with grain, and I immediately imagined the Goddess of Summer And she has the same spikelets in her hands "

MY HEAD

"I drew this sketch in the Metro and the thoughts in my head were confused as branches. All these little leaves and twigs flickering and meaningless as an uncontrollable stream of thoughts, are so hard to stop "

THE DRAGON

"What could be nicer than drawing dragons? A beautiful myth about intelligent creatures with the ability to fly I love them very much and often draw these beasts "



CALLAS

"Slavs believe that calla is a funerary flower This overgrowth is like the burial of one s feelings, one s desires It s stupor or sleep of trees in winter rather than death "

Sketchbook Oksana Kerro

THE HIDE

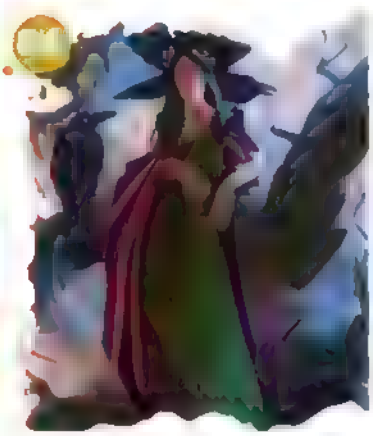
"This girl had to flee to the remote forests to hide her beautiful dragon from others who's too small to defend himself. In the same way we hide our cherished dreams and desires, fearing that they'll be destroyed

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX Workshops

Workshops assets are available...
Download each workshop's WIPs, final image and brushes by turning to page 6. And if you see the video workshop badge you can watch the artist in action, too

Advice from the world's best artists



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Create a clear story and memorable character designs with Jason Rainville.

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Traditional media & Photoshop

DRAWING & INKING WITH CONFIDENCE

Andrew Mar takes you through his creative process from initial roughs to the final inking steps, as he uses pen and inks to create a moody warrior

Artist PROFILE

Andrew Mar

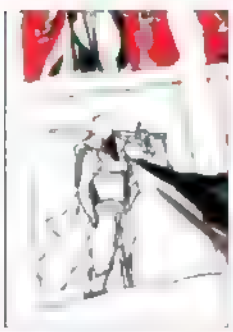
LOCATION: LA

Ink is my passion I love its unforgiving nature and its demand for attention against the blank page. Ink is black, paper is white. Yet even on opposite sides of the spectrum, these two can work together to create something soft, subtle and delicate.

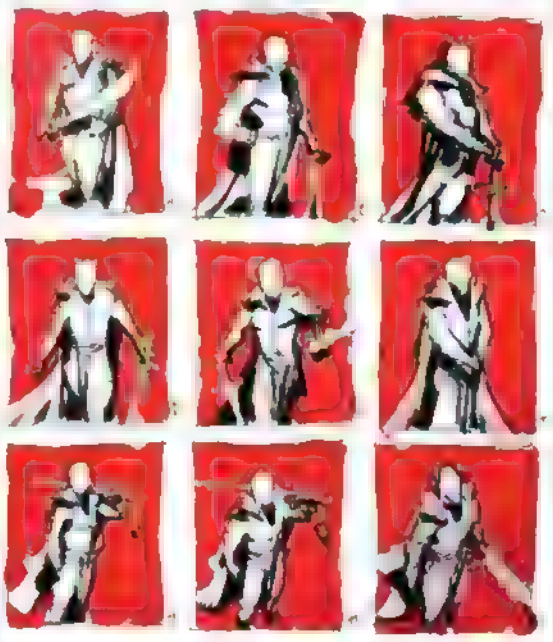
Since working at game studios, I've forgotten most traditional mediums, but ink always calls back to me. After a day of staring into monitors, I want nothing more than to sit down with my sketchbook without an undo button to have my back.

I believe any artist looking to create fantastic and mythical characters and environments grounded in reality should put in the hours to study from life. Figure-drawing workshops, using friends and family as models or the park down the street are all perfect to study from. The constant sponging of information, no matter how seemingly insignificant or unconscious, adds to your ever-growing visual library.

As I work pretty organically, there will be no grids, no measurements, to perfectly scale from loose pencil scribbles to a tight finished drawing. I let the drawings breathe a bit. They inform me as much as I guide them. If he wants to shift his weight to one leg a bit, I'll shift his shoulder to compensate. For a medium as permanent as ink, I find it helps to not get too married to the pencil drawing. Instead, I set important landmarks, lock down a strong gesture, and dial in on things I'm not as confident in, such as fingers and legs. Once I'm hopeful that the final piece could be cool, I switch out the pencil for the pen and hope for the best. And if it falls short, well… it's only ink and paper.



WORKSHOP MATERIALS

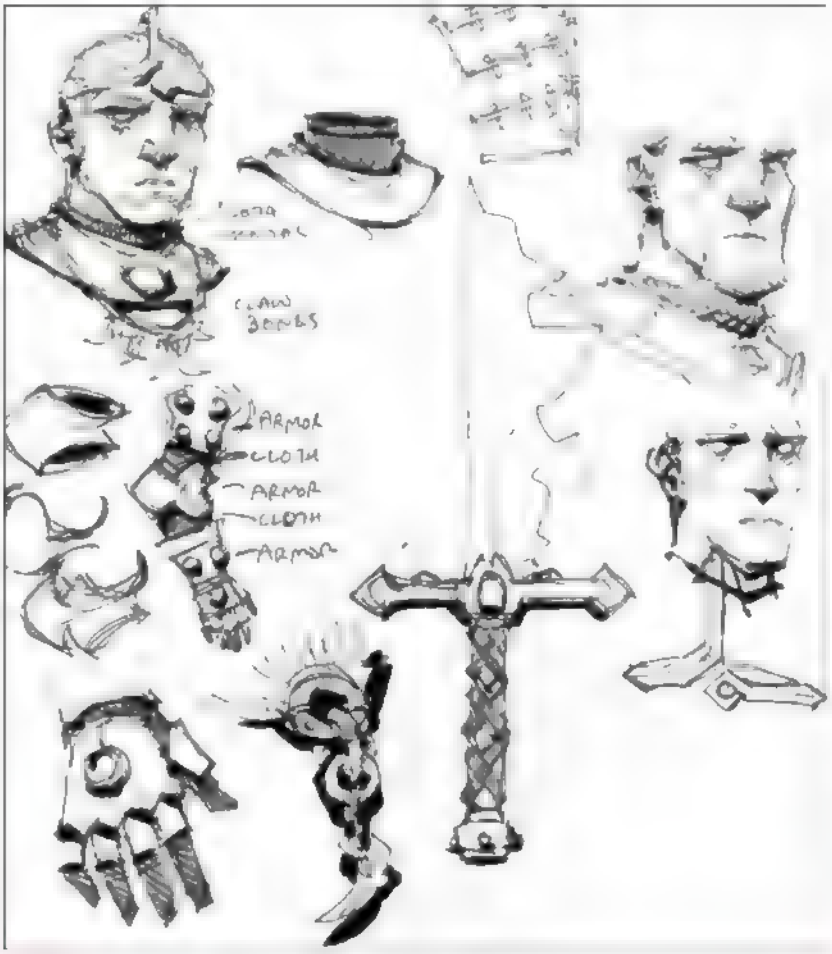


1 Create loose thumbnails

When doing thumbnails, I'm never too concerned with anatomy or costumes. I aim for a gesture, a stance, a feeling. I keep these vague as things will inevitably shift and change a bit as I go along. I like to use a thick brush pen to see how shadows might fall into place for the final.

2 Draw a tighter thumbnail

Since the first thumbnails are so vague, I want to have a better idea of what I want the final piece to be, so I expand on it while keeping it small. Here, I can start to think about what the face and armour could look like, all without being forced to lock anything down ➤➤

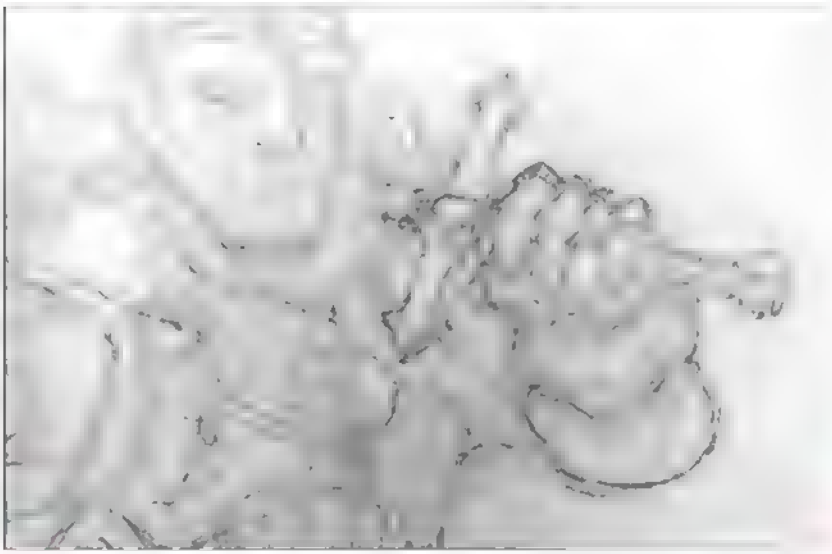


3 Dressing and costuming ideas

I make notes to myself separately so things don't get too muddled. I jot down details I want to include, such as a claw necklace and tassels on his cape, identifying scars… anything to make him feel more like an individual These mostly solidify my final thoughts so I don't spend too much time erasing on my final paper.

4 Produce a pencil sketch

From the thumbnail I start sketching out the final image on my Bristol with a 2H pencil so that the image remains light for best inking conditions. Here, I'm just making sure all the major elements are in the correct position before I start narrowing in on details.



5 Introduce focal points

I want to focus on the face, hands and sword so I'll spend a little more time clearing those up for myself. I like to keep the rest of the pencils as loose as possible to preserve a little spontaneous energy as I start to ink.

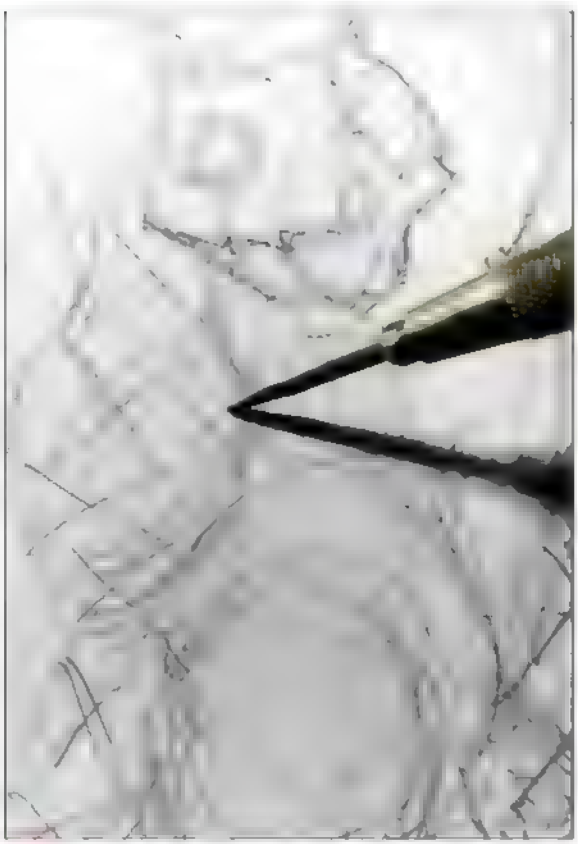
6 Anatomy under the armour

I step back and give the final image a look over to check my proportions. I take into account his muscle structure underneath the armour to make sure everything is believable. I have to make small adjustments to give him the bulk I want him to feel.

7 Facial expression

Since the face is naturally the most important focal point, I spend most of my time getting it before I start lining. He's a warrior prince; he should look a little worn and weary, while retaining a regal feel. If I have to, I'll pull up portrait reference to make sure it looks just right.

PRO SECRETS
Observational drawing



8 Plan for the shadows

The last step before I make irreparable changes in ink is to plan out where I want to add shadows using Xs for solid blacks. I take into consideration where I want to lead the eye, so creating a lot of contrast around my focal points – the face, hands, the sword – is in my best interest.

9 Lining with ink

Take a shot of whiskey, because there's no second guessing yourself here. If something can be done with one stroke, never use two. Too often I see an artist who's new to ink use 10 with what can be accomplished with one. Practise the route in the air above your art, and then execute perfectly.

10 Adding clarity to the materials on the character

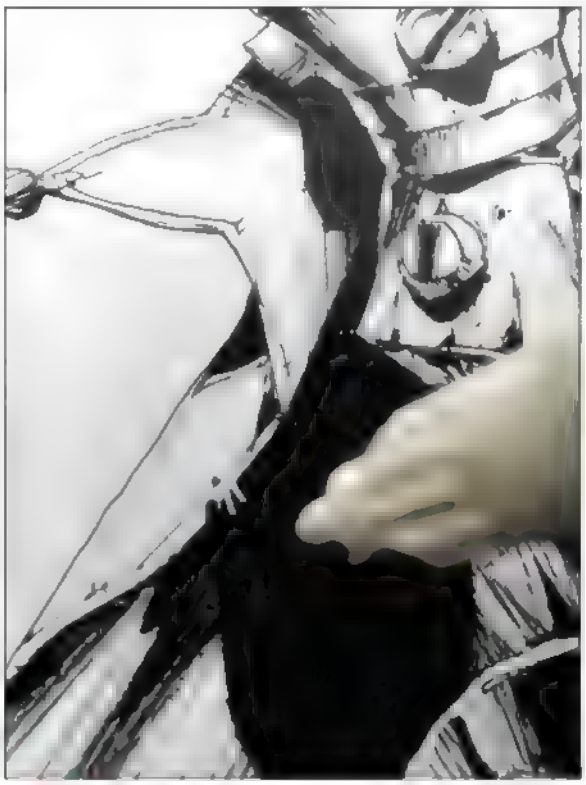
I have a few different materials I want to convey here, such as fur, metal and cloth. All of these can be distilled down with specific details. Fur can be shown through large clumps and individual strands, metal with nicks and dents, and cloth with weave patterns.

11 Spotting blacks

With the Pentel brush pen, I start filling in large spots and hitting small dabs of ink in areas that I identify won't receive light in a manner similar to ambient occlusion on a 3D model. These shadows start to give weight and dimension to the character, and help pop him out.

12 Blending and hatching

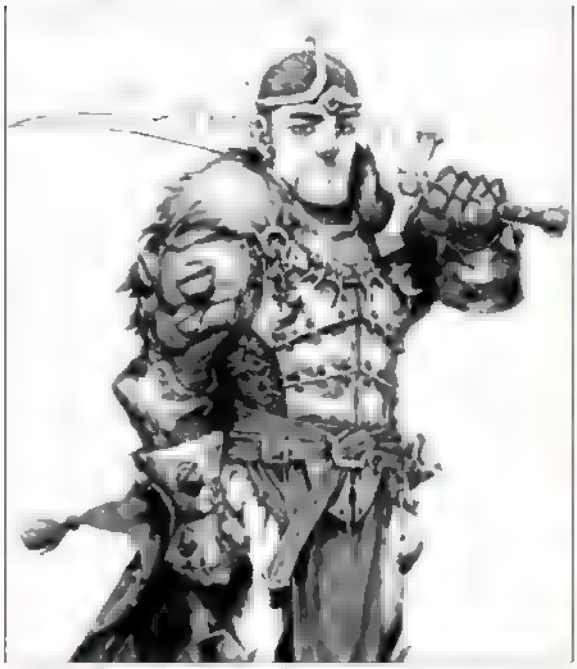
Cast shadows can remain harsh, but form shadows need to be softened, so I go back to the Hi-Tec-C and start hatching. I use my whole gamut of pens ranging from 0.25 to 0.4, and grey to achieve my desired level of smoothness between the brush pen and the thinner ink lines.



PRO SECRETS
Surrounded by inspiration

PRO SECRETS
Keep a work life balance

13 Introducing white to the image
With the Molotow white paint pen, I can pick out details from spots previously covered in black such as stray hairs. I use this sparingly to keep the surface of the piece as clean as I can get, while also providing a nice, finished look. I can also use the pen to fix minor accidents.



14 Bringing in a grey tone
The theory behind the use of my grey wash is to reinforce my focal points and materials, namely anything reflective such as polished metal. The absence of the wash in this case leaves behind the blank white page, picking out a highlight and effectively communicating what the armour is made of.

15 Finishing the painting in Photoshop
After scanning, I make a few minor tweaks in Photoshop and mask out the character from the negative space using the Magic Wand tool. I contract the selection by a few pixels and fill it with white, and on a separate layer, fill the background with a bold red to finish it off.

Maria Poliakova shows how to use different colours to create unique imagery

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Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

Get better at colour

Freshen up your colour techniques and learn how to embrace different hues!

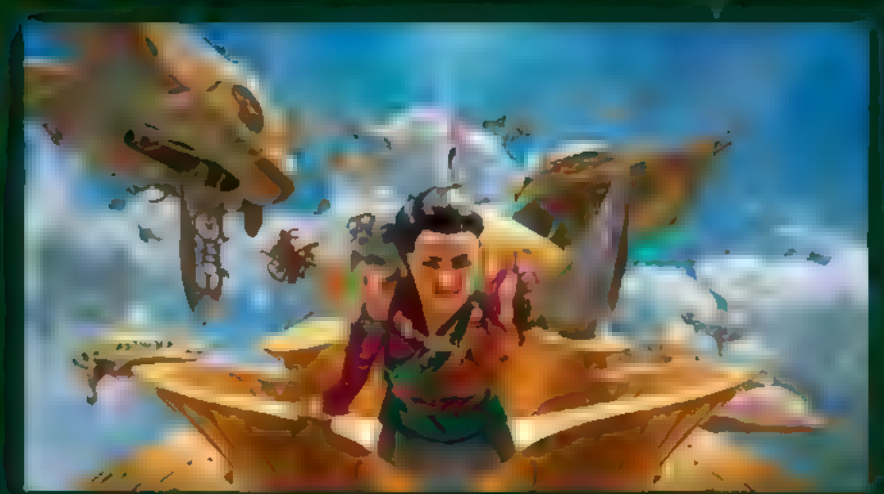
All this and more!

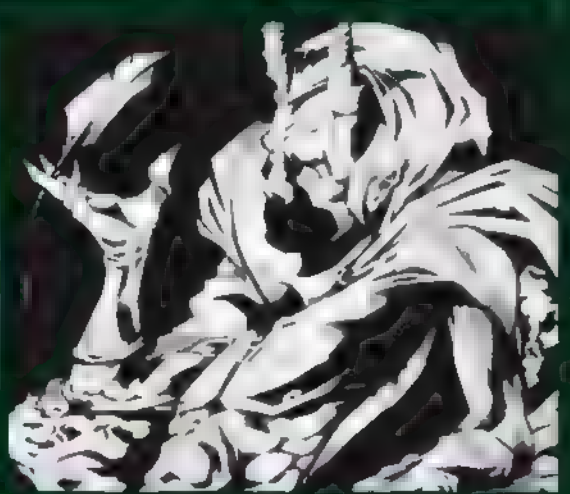
15 ways to paint dragons
Artist Alex Stone reveals how he creates snarky dragons and more!

Magical art of Jason Rainville
We talk fantasy art, bodybuilding and more with the Canadian artist.

Take your art skills outside
Christopher Moeller kick-starts his new series on plein air painting.

Hand drawn in pen and ink
Illustrator Mr Hass visualises Mephisto, the demonic figure of Faustian legend.



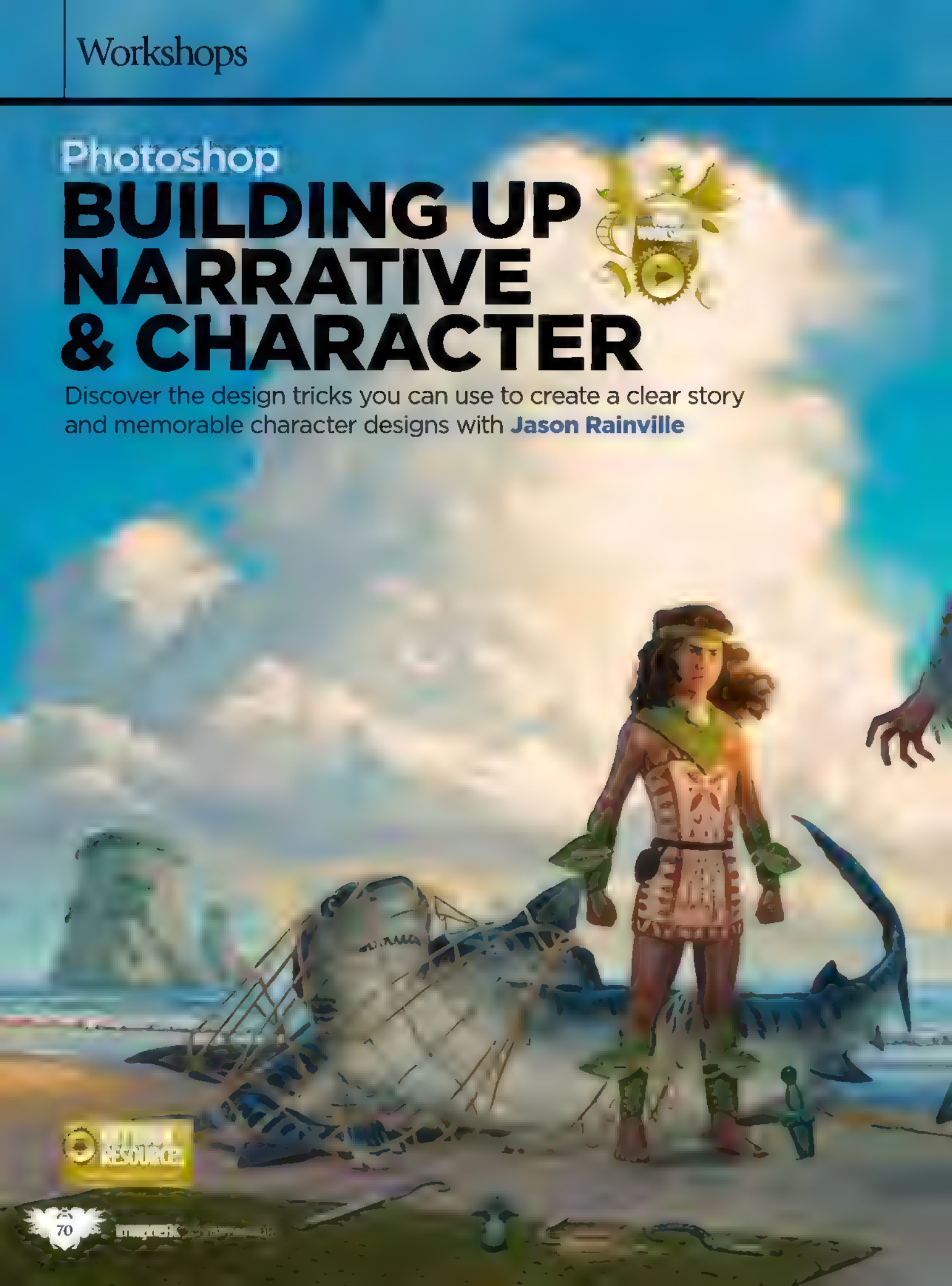


ISSUE 156 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 1 December*

Photoshop

BUILDING UP NARRATIVE & CHARACTER

Discover the design tricks you can use to create a clear story and memorable character designs with **Jason Rainville**



Artist PROFILE

Jason Rainville

LOCATION: Canada

[illegible] fantasy and science fiction artist who [illegible] to incorporate [illegible] history into his work. [illegible]

I've always loved a good story, and I've come to appreciate just how enjoyable, important and difficult storytelling can be in visual art. I think it connects to the viewer more than something that may simply be beautiful. A glamour shot of your favourite fictional character is fun, but an illustration with a story enables you to journey through the image, to live in the space it creates.

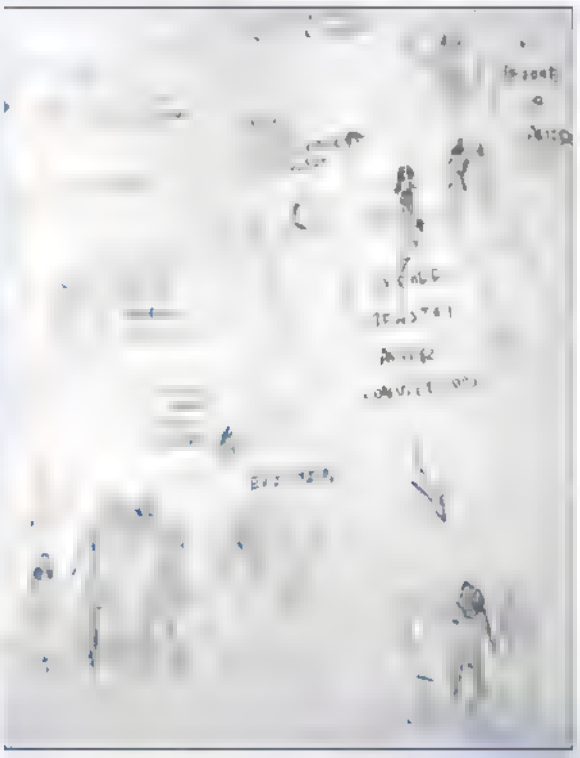
I'm also a strong proponent of clear and memorable design. So much design today tends towards clutter – packing as much detail into a design regardless of whether it serves a purpose or not. We can measure this too: if I asked you to draw an Imperial TIE fighter or the Starship Enterprise, chances are even if you're not a sci-fi fan you'd be able to doodle a semi-accurate outline. A ship from some of the games/films of today? That might be more difficult.

Both of these ideas – narrative and memorable design – are important things for artists to remember so that their images have a lasting impact with their audience. In the following workshop, I'll go through how I tackle these key concepts.

PRO SECRETS

Storytelling advice

Molly Bang's book Picture This: How Pictures Work, is essential reading for anyone in the visual arts. It's efficiently breaks down all the elements of a picture and how to tell a story with the simplest elements. The entire book is brilliantly illustrated using only cut-out pieces of construction paper. If she can tell a story with those basic tools, imagine what you can do [illegible]



1 Concept possibilities

Coming up with ideas is difficult, especially for narrative-heavy illustrations, but there are a few guidelines you can use, such as including an action and a reaction. I explore some ideas on the page, such as an older official giving her badge of office to a younger woman. The action is the giving of the badge, the reaction would be the sad look on the older woman's face.

2 Thumbnail exploration

I settle on a scene where a girl refuses to kill a shark-person as a rite of passage. I sketch out simple thumbnails in pencil while trying to reinforce this narrative. Visual closeness creates relationships; visual distance also creates emotional distance. So placing the girl close to the shark and away from her parents shows us whose side she's on.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: FLAT CHALK

I used this to create the clouds. It's best used for softer subjects

RECTANGLE TEXTURED

I like using this brush for rocks and hard textured surfaces

OVAL BRUSH

Used for wide variety of subjects, including figures and environments

3 Contrast and consistency

When trying to create a memorable design, think about large flat shapes not only for a silhouette, but also within the character. Bright shapes contrast against dark shapes; areas of detail contrast with flat areas of colour. Think about consistency, too. All of these things add up to something that someone can draw roughly from memory.

4 Character design

I'm using large simple shapes that are consistent over each person (triangles on chest and jutting from limbs) and areas of contained detail (within their torso clothing) to make these designs memorable. As these are a sea people expected to hunt sharks, their clothing contains details for swimming and repelling shark attacks.

5 Sketching from the concept

Whether for a client or myself, I produce a sketch of the scene (usually quickly and without reference) to give an idea of how it might look. I also take time to solidify ideas about the image. I come up with the idea that the girl would throw a knife given to her into the sand. To reinforce this, one of her mother's knives is missing.

6 Rough colour sketch

I set the lines layer to Multiply and begin painting colours directly underneath. You can see how even now the design is clear and memorable: tan cloth surrounded by their dark skin; then at the outer edge the grey shark and (for the girl who hasn't completed her rite) green plant limb coverings. The tall cloud behind the girl helps frame her and represents her spirit and determination.

7 Time for a rough resketch

After I gather and shoot some reference, I create a second line drawing over my work. The first was for gesture, while this one is for form and anatomy. I try to wrap lines over the form of the subjects so that I can try to perceive them in three-dimensional space better. I carry out this stage while observing my reference shots, using them to guide my decisions. ➤➤

PRO SECRETS

Memory game

A challenge: pick some of your favourite fictional characters, ships or items and put them in a list. Then start an exercise where you have 10 seconds to draw each one. The more efficient designs will likely be the most memorable, and be the better of the doodles you create. Then take a critical look at those designs to figure out how they use shapes and detail efficiently.

8 Tight resketch helps to sum up my ideas

This last digital sketch focuses on simply crystallising what's there. Here we can see more clearly the girl's outfit compared to her parents. This rite involves killing a shark person in order to get the more sleek and durable shark skin coverings. She's refusing to do this, and her straight pose versus her parents' comparatively flimsy poses makes her seem more strong and stable. Action and reaction.

9 Produce a new underpainting

The image looks to be nearly done after this stage. I've coloured underneath the tight sketch using my gathered references. Now I'm just sorting out the overall colours and lighting, making everything harmonious. Notice how the parents overlap with similar values, and the girl and shark overlap? This creates two key groups in this narrative. The distance and knife between them means they're at odds.

10 Clouds and waves

I decide to be more painterly with the clouds and sea. I like the nice chunky details of the waves and surf in the bottom left that I create with my oval brush, and the clouds are a treat to render with a flat chalky brush. While these are invented, all the while I'm keeping my eye on my references to guide the shapes and colours.

11 A shark's tale

The shark presents a unique challenge, because its counter-change colouring (dark on top and light underneath) meant that it's harder to shade realistically when the light source is from above. Again, reference helps. Depicting this creature as sympathetic rather than fearsome supports the story in the scene. While the girl might try to save a scary monster as well, it's easier to hammer home the narrative if it's more docile.

12 A determined daughter

The daughter has her face toward the viewer and illuminated by light, which are more signals that she's the heroine here. The motifs on her clothing are plant based, but she retains the shark-tooth patterns along the edges. There's still a lot of detail to be had here – the tan and ochre patterns, the green woven plants – but they're contained within unified shapes.

PRO SECRETS

Try out new processes

My process works [illegible] me, but it might not [illegible] you. I spent a long [illegible] trying different approaches and I [illegible] settled on this one [illegible] my purposes. I have [illegible] specific I can get [illegible] like, so that I can be [illegible] more [illegible] when [illegible] colour. I [illegible] colour rather than [illegible] grayscale and over[illegible] because I feel it's [illegible] to control. Experiment.

13 Meet the parents

The parents' design is similar to their daughters, which links them to her despite the positioning of the characters. They differ in their arm and leg protection mainly, but also in more subtle ways: for example, the design on the mother's back is of a shark and the father has a shark tooth necklace. Their looks and body language of surprise are essential for telling this story.

14 Adding the final touches

With some tweaks to the values (making the parents' legs darker as well as more contrast in the girl's face) the rendering of the reed mat with some tools (another narrative element, implying what's to be done to the shark) and the addition of an ensnaring net on the shark, we have a final image that tells a clear story and some characters with interesting and memorable designs.

Core Skills: Part 4

ZBRUSHCORE'S ALPHAS & STROKES

Combine Alphas and modified brush strokes in ZBrushCore to add intricate details to a 3D model. **Pablo Muñoz Gómez** shows you how

Artist **PROFILE**

Pablo Muñoz Gómez

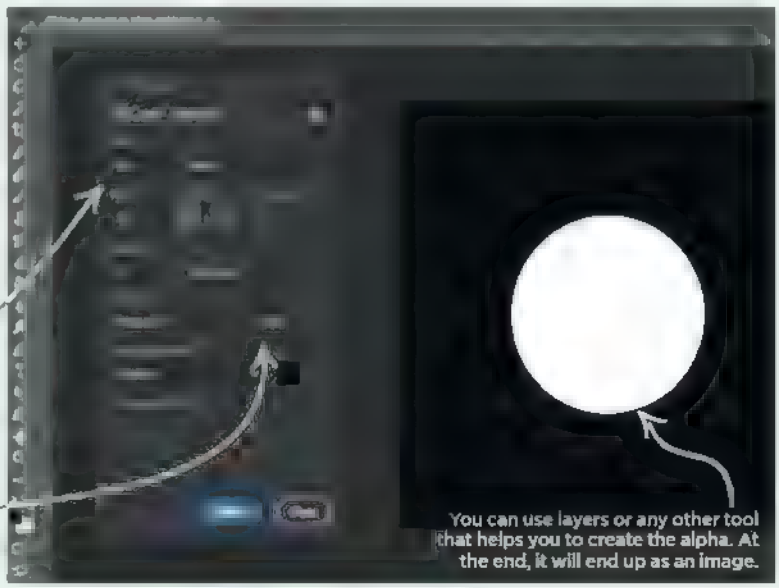
ZBrushCore's default brushes act as the backbone of the software. They are the tools that enable you to pull, push and adjust the surface of your model in a controlled fashion. Each brush has a different effect when the stroke is applied, and each effect is the result of two variables, the Alpha and the Stroke type.

Put simply, an Alpha will determine the tip or shape of your brush, while the Stroke type takes care of how the brush is applied. An Alpha is a flat image that ZBrushCore interprets as a depth map. This means that the different greyscale values will be associated with different depths when the brush with the Alpha is applied

Any black and white image can be used as an Alpha. The brightest parts (whites) of the image represent the highest points and the dark areas (blacks) indicate elements that are further away from the viewer.

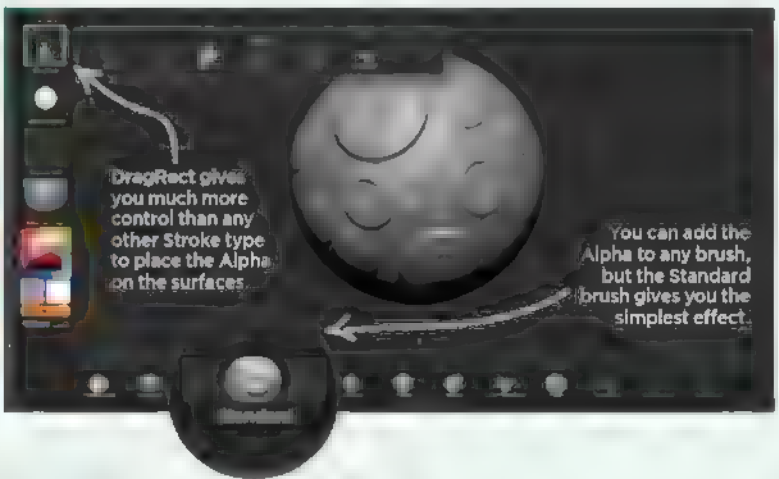
1 Creating alphas

To build an Alpha, create a square document in an image-editing program such as Photoshop or Krita. Start by setting the size to 512 by 512 pixels and the background to pure black. Use any tool you want to create a shape with white colour – I'm creating something simple like a white circle in the centre of the document and save it as a PNG.



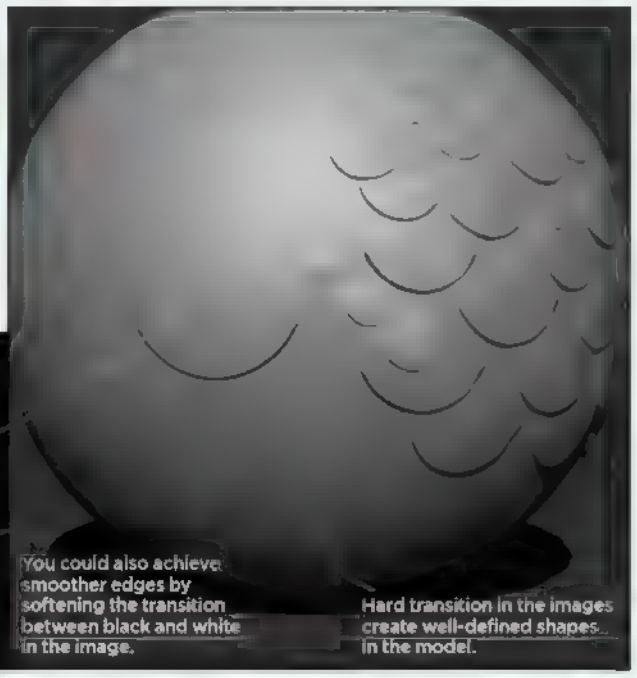
PRO SECRETS

Balloon art



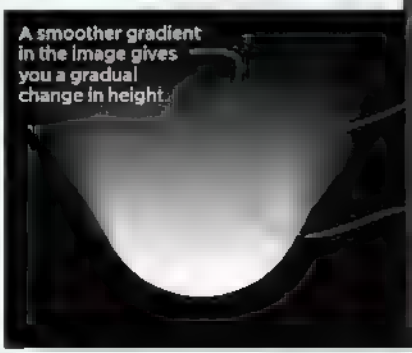
2 Loading and using Alphas

Moving back into ZBrushCore, we need to choose a brush to attach our new Alpha to. Go ahead and select the Standard brush from the bottom of the user interface, then from the Alpha menu at the top, click Import and select the PNG image that's just been created. In addition, click the Stroke type and select the DragRect. Click and drag to apply the Alpha to any 3D object you have, which in this case is a simple sphere.



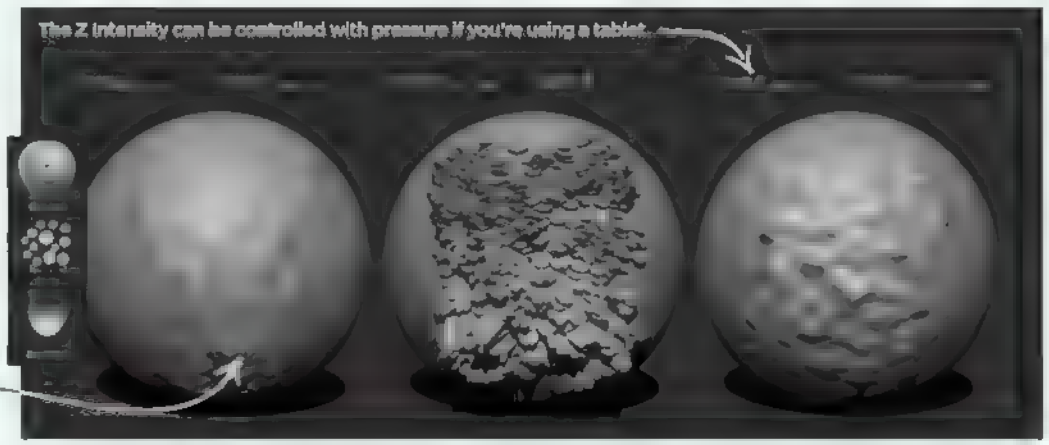
3 Modifying Alphas

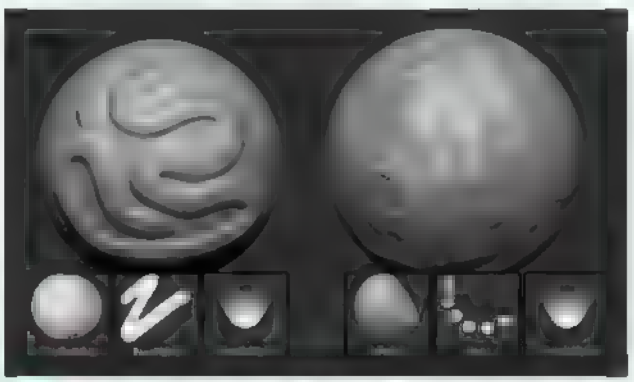
If you end up with jagged lines around the border then you might need more resolution (subdivision levels) in your model. Furthermore, the transition between the whites and blacks in the image might be too harsh. Go into Photoshop and blur one side of the white circle to create more grey values. Open the image in ZBrushCore and drag it again. It should now look more like a scale



4 Stroke type

With our Alpha looking better, change the Stroke type to Spray. This turns the brush into a spray can when clicking and dragging over the surface. At the top of the interface, you have two important sliders· Z Intensity to control depth, and the Focal Shift that enables you to fade the intensity from the centre of the brush stroke





5 Same Alpha, multiple effects

Once you're happy with the Alpha you've created, you can experiment not only with different Stroke types, but with different brushes. Choose the ClayBuildup brush and select the Alpha we've been working on. The effect is similar to a tube or rope. To simulate the look of rough clay for instance, you can use hPolish with the same Alpha and hold down Alt while applying the brush strokes to invert the effect.

Artist insight

16 WAYS TO DRAW BETTER CREATURES

Bobby Rebholz wants you to design fantasy creatures with purpose, and presents a range of techniques for making them look as real as possible

Artist **PROFILE**

Bobby Rebholz

LOCATION: US

Bobby shifted from industrial design to freelance creature design and is currently teaching creature design for film and video games for CGMA.

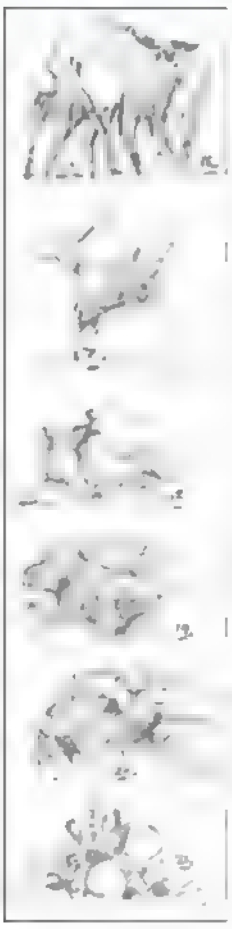
https://vimeo.com/bobby-r

Creatures have always been a part of my artistic journey. Ever since I was four years old, I can remember drawing creatures that I saw in films and on television. I spent hours trying to draw little plastic dinosaurs. As I grew older, my passion wasn't just drawing creatures, it was drawing in general. I quickly realised that this was going to be my profession in life.

After going to school for industrial design and applying those skills to freelancing and to creature creation, I've been fortunate to not only teach for CGMA, but to learn new things along the way that have helped shape my design sense when it comes to creature design.

It's vital that your creatures be believable because people are watching and studying what you create. In my experience, no matter how crazy your designs seem to get, just remember that they all must be grounded in some way. Here, I'll explain some tips I've learned about making creatures believable and how you can achieve this goal

THUMBNAIL CREATION

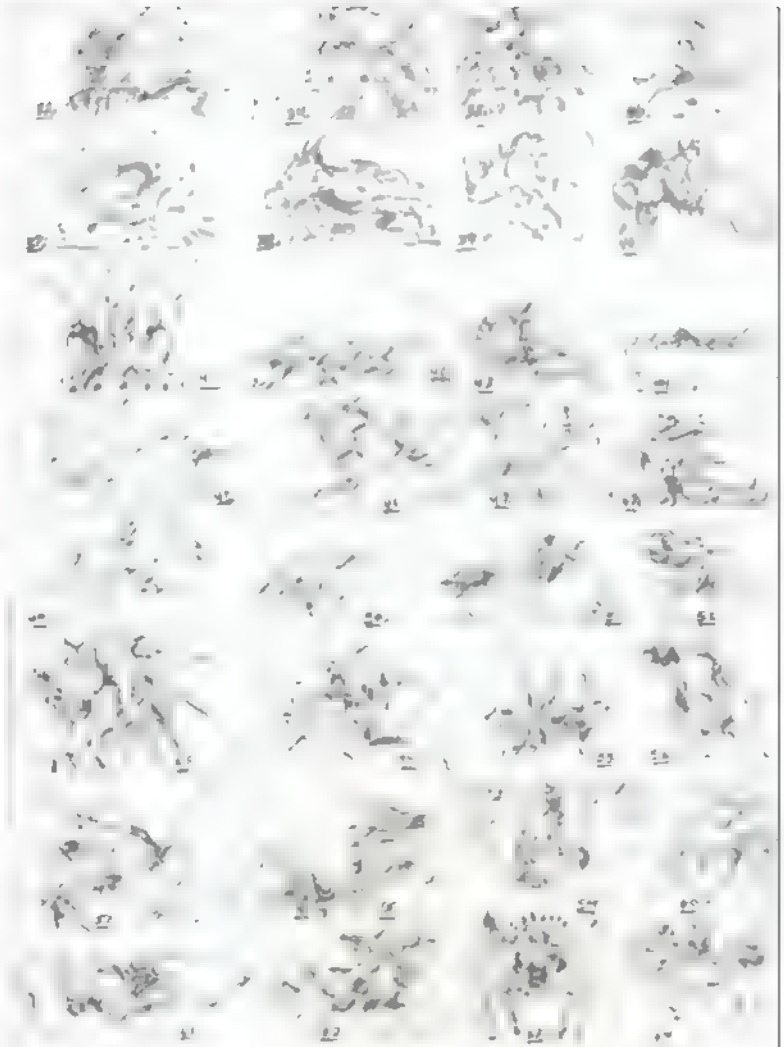


1 SHAPE LANGUAGE

A step that's often skipped in the design process – as well as in portfolios – is the thumbnail creation process. Chances are that you won't land on your best design right out of the gate. This is where thumbnail exploration comes into play with the addition of studying real-world reference. Don't worry about details at this stage. Instead, focus on shape language and just having fun with the shapes you're creating. By doing so, your final design will be that much more thought out and believable, and it'll have your passion for the creation process shining through.

2 KEEP EXPLORING!

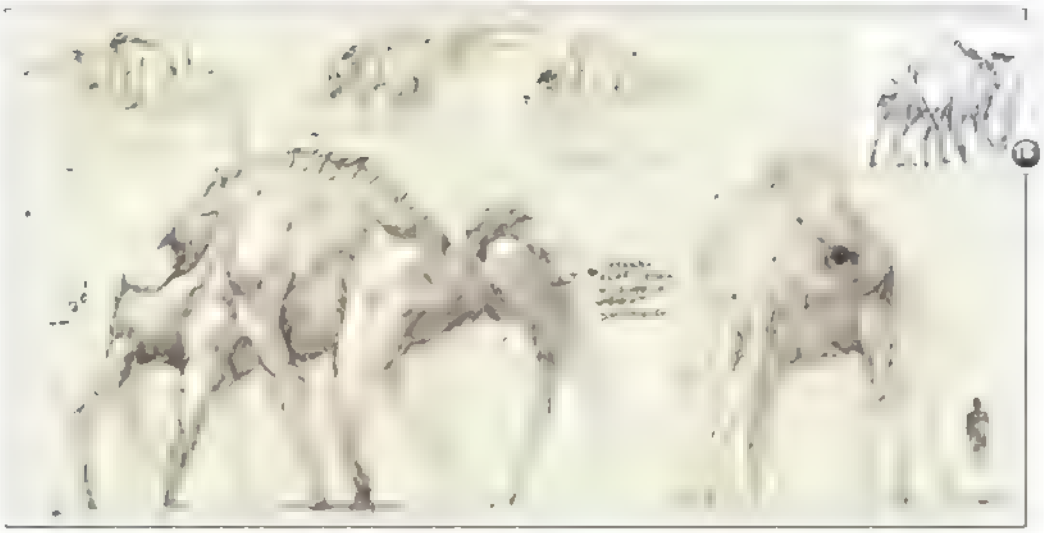
You can never do too many thumbnail sketches. This stage is vital and ensures that you're exploring as many avenues as possible. A lot of times, we'll get a specific idea in our head and think that design is the final. Although this does happen on rare occasions, chances are you're far from landing that awesome final design. Thumbnail creation will ease the process and surprise you at the same time. That's why it's so fun!

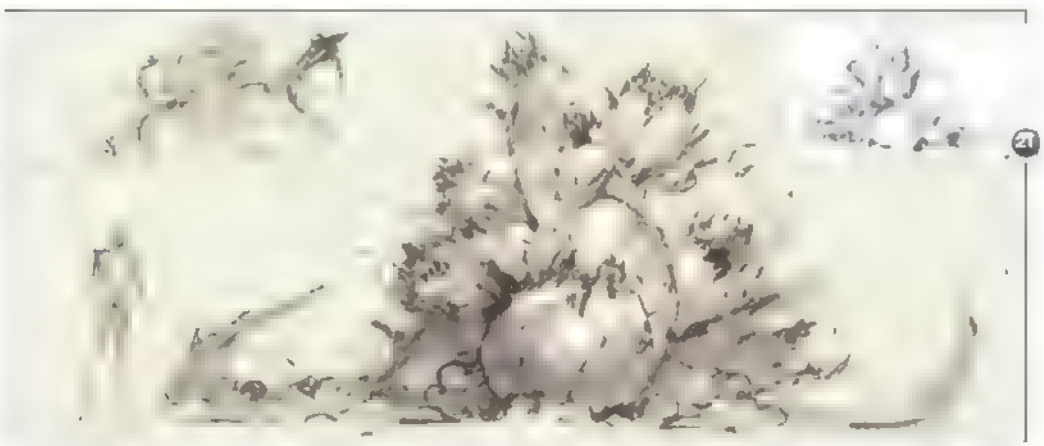


NARROWING DOWN YOUR CHOICES

3 LOOK BEYOND THE NORM FOR IDEAS

The first thumbnail that interests me is number 16 (seen in the image from tip one). One of the important aspects about choosing thumbnails is finding an interesting silhouette. In this case, a multi-legged creature with a strange torso excites me and I go with it. I try to find silhouettes that don't follow standard shapes, which verge on the cliché. For instance, it's common to see creatures with hulking shoulders with small heads. There's nothing wrong with that; however, I'm aiming for a non-traditional design.

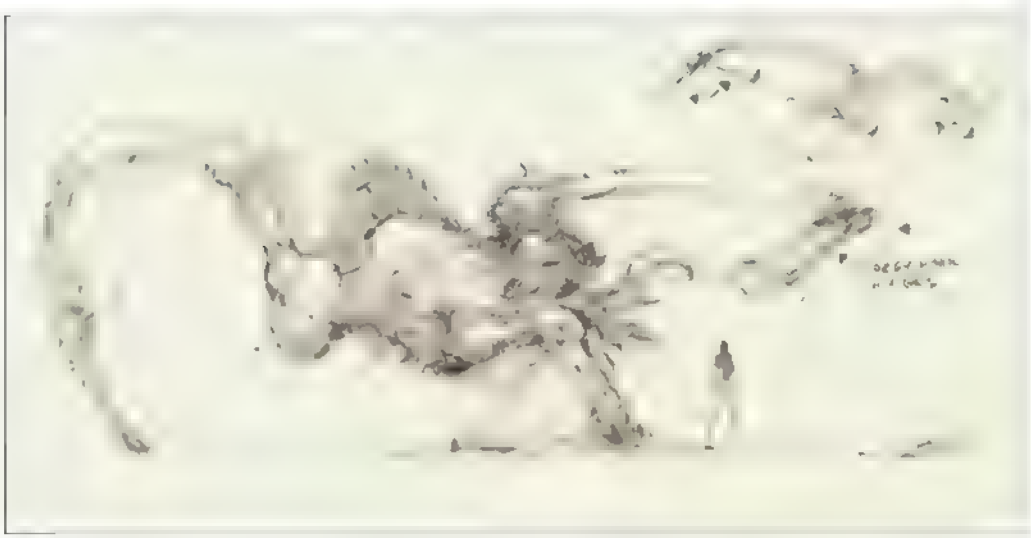




4 OUTSIDE THE BOX

Number 21 (also seen in tip one) intrigues me, specifically because I never intended for my creature to look like fungus. The silhouette is working because we have a familiar shape while it still looks unexpected. Whenever I sketch creatures, I try to ensure there's a uniqueness with a touch of familiarity. But I'll go into more detail about familiarity in a later tip. With this thumbnail, I explore plant shapes and try to imagine how this creature will move and eat. Let's see what the third choice brings!

> "I try to find silhouettes that don't follow standard shapes, which verge on the cliché"



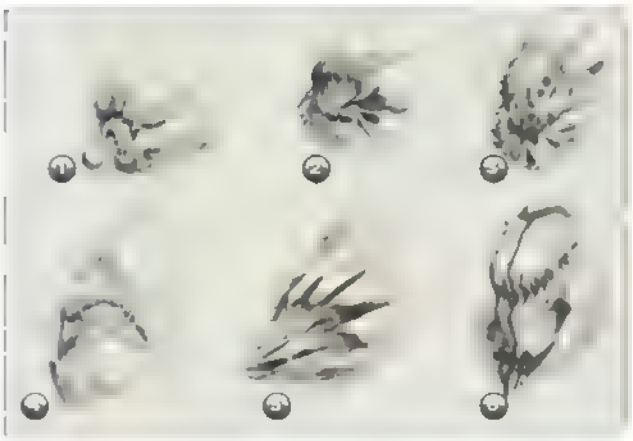
5 REAL-WORLD INSECTS COMBINED

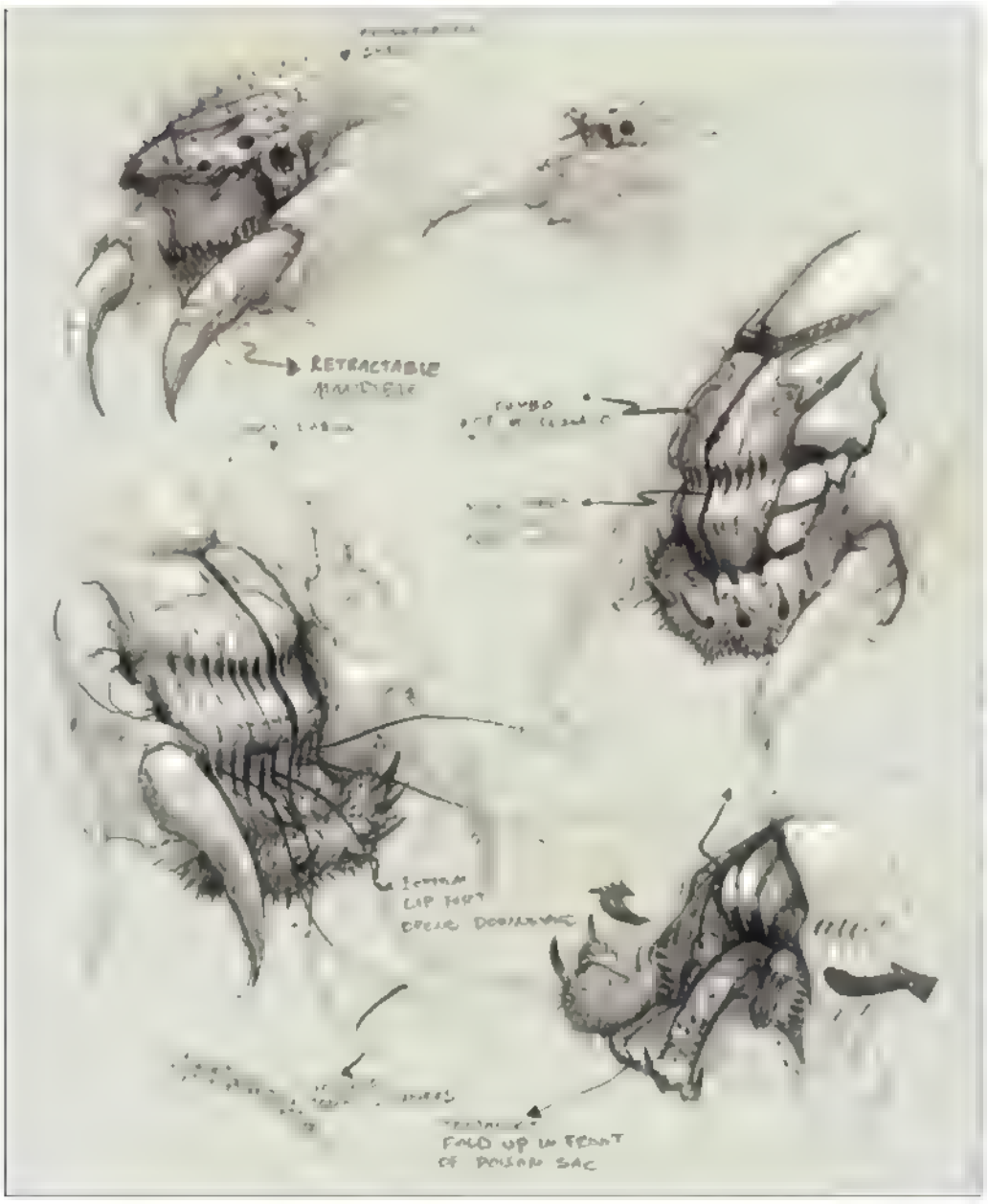
This thumbnail intrigues me because it's a mix of insect shapes. Insects have been a major influence in my creature designs. In this particular case, I use shapes from crickets and spiders. The rear legs offer a unique shape, with them bowing outward and able to support the creature's weight as well as aiding in jumping. I'm also choosing this as the third thumbnail to develop because something about it says 'other worldly' to me. It's a shape that's not common and should offer fun possibilities. Using unexpected shapes can turn into awesome designs down the road. ➳

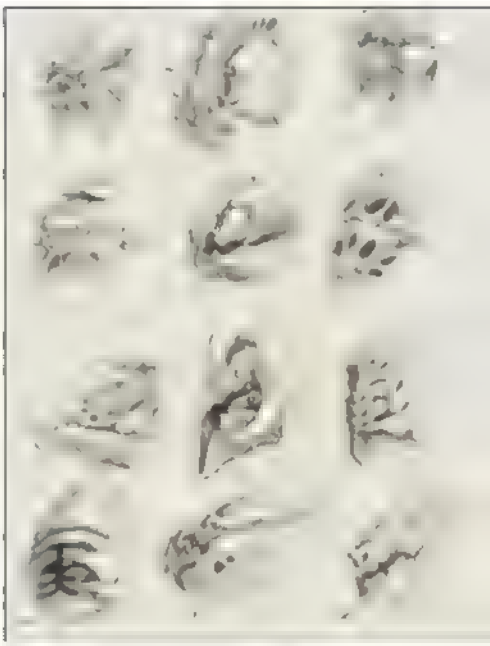
HEAD EXPLORATION

6 TAKE INSPIRATION FROM NATURE

One of the most enjoyable stages in the creature design process is head exploration. Here, I'm exploring the first round of head designs. I know that I want something insect-like and creepy. So, I begin looking at references of Earth insects and arachnids. Whenever you're stuck and don't know where to go next in the design process, just take a good look at real-world animals! They offer all of the answers and give you clarity when coming up with new designs.







7 MAINTAINING THE SHAPE LANGUAGE

It's important not to limit yourself when exploring with thumbnails. So I'm doing a second round of head studies just so I have a good number of ideas. It's easy to get carried away with random shapes and not-so-believable features. With these head studies, I make sure that all of the shapes stay within a unified shape language. For instance, number 5 (above left) looks like a combination of an earthworm's head and bark from a tree. I make sure that all of the shapes taper like a worm's head and the ends look like broken bark.

8 HEAD DESIGN FINALISATION

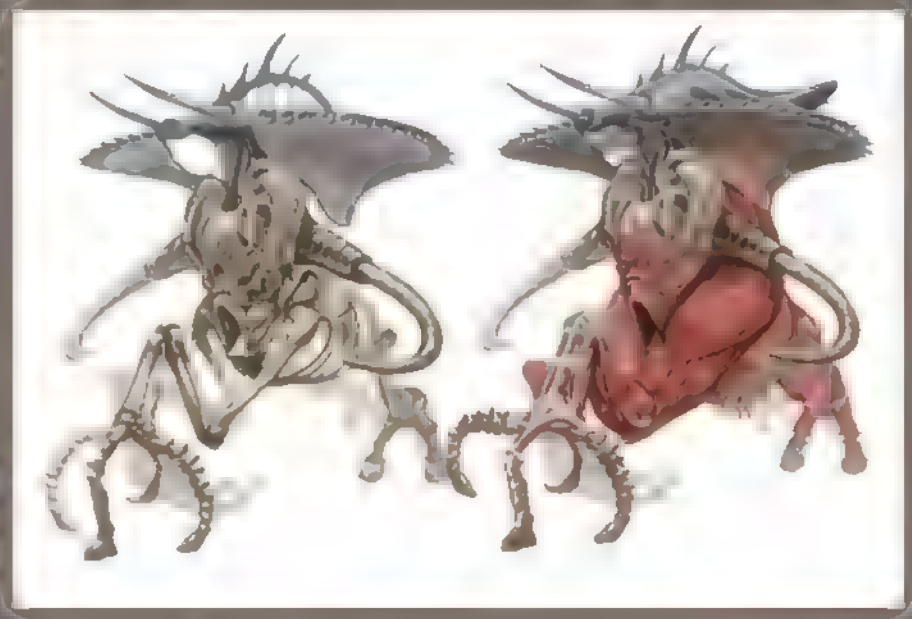
Refining the head is so much fun. This is where you can really bring the creature's personality out. Here, you can see that I go into detail about the creature's face, functions and overall aesthetic. I go into the importance of call-outs in tip 12, but here you can see they're useful for describing a functional feature. And make sure that your creature has personality. This doesn't necessarily mean facial expressions, but the skull design, eyes, mouth, muscles and overall shape are very important.

9 ESTABLISHING ANATOMY

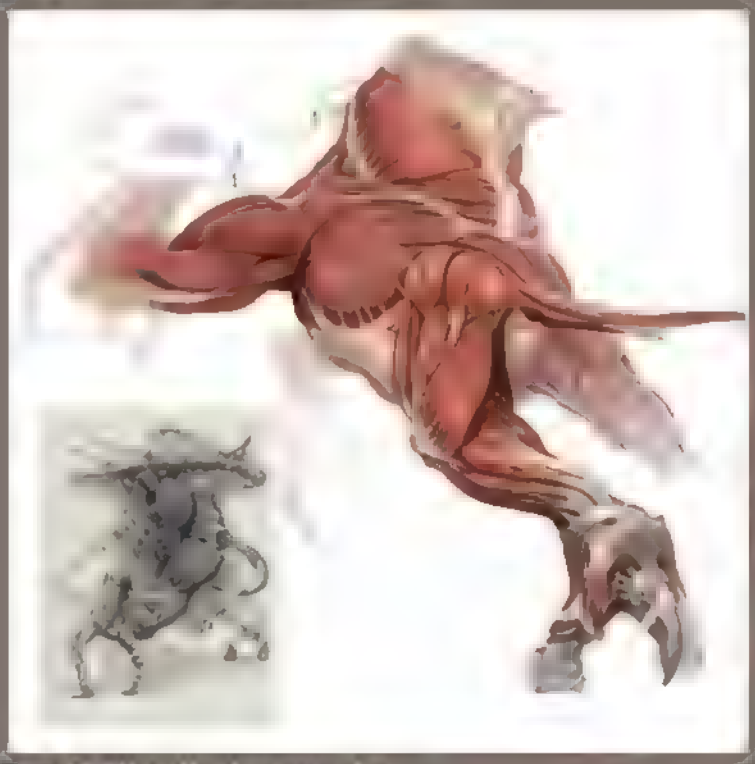
and see how far you can push the believability of your imaginary creature

A Muscles and tissue

When thinking about your creature's anatomy, consider the bone structure first. This stage is often forgotten because we want to jump right into the cool skin textures and muscles. I sketch the creature's skeleton on the left followed by what the muscles will look like attached to the bones on the right. Now we have a clear indication of the muscle structure in front view. The skull should be drawn before any other bones because even the skull can show personality which dictates the facial structure later on.



> Rear three-quarter views are just as crucial as front views in selling your design...

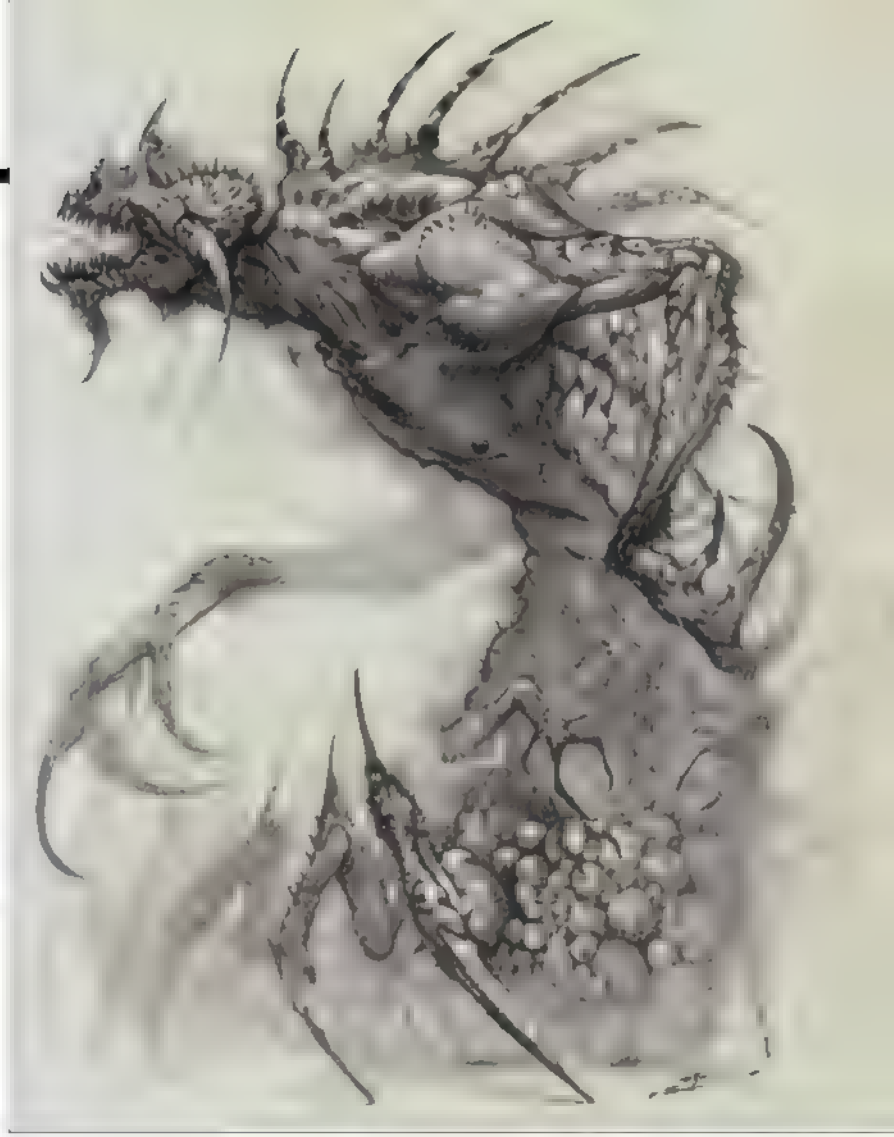


B Putting the legs on show

C Combining anatomy elements

Now, I go into detail about the tendons and muscles of the arms and then juxtapose that on to my original pencil sketch. I'm choosing the arm for the close-up because it's a

FINAL DESIGN

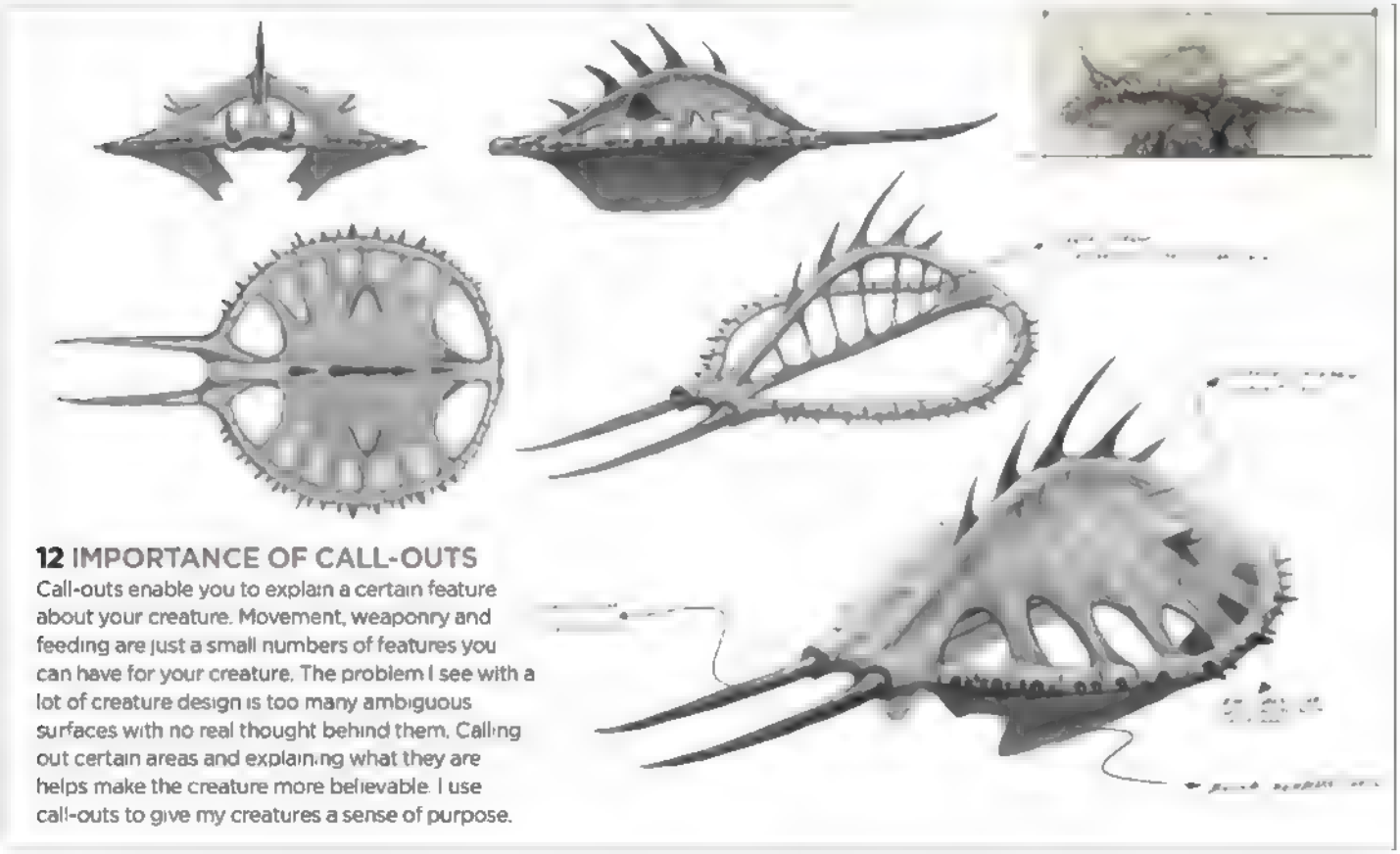


10 PROPORTIONS

Out of the three sketches I developed earlier, I'm choosing the third ideation because of the uniqueness of the silhouette. Proportions are key because it helps solidify a design. Its arms, legs, torso and head aren't too long or too short. The shapes are just the right size so we don't question something being out of place. This creature has unique proportions so I must make sure it remains believable using real-world reference

11 SKIN TEXTURE

Skin texture is extremely important because it adds realism to your creation. It also gives the viewer a close look at your creature's environment, eating habits and evolution. With skin texture, I'm figuring out what type of environment my creature lives in. And with this information, I can begin to tell its story.



12 IMPORTANCE OF CALL-OUTS

Call-outs enable you to explain a certain feature about your creature. Movement, weaponry and feeding are just a small numbers of features you can have for your creature. The problem I see with a lot of creature design is too many ambiguous surfaces with no real thought behind them. Calling out certain areas and explaining what they are helps make the creature more believable. I use call-outs to give my creatures a sense of purpose.

13 ENERGY
Showing energy and movement gives a real sense of how your creatures moves as if it were standing in front of you. Conveying that type of realism will be helpful when you're sending your sketches off to the art director and modelling department. They need to get a real sense of how your creation will behave as a living, breathing creation. Energy brings your design to life.

14 BRING IN A DEGREE OF FAMILIARITY
Establishing familiarity means you're bringing recognisable shapes into your creature design. Indeed, this approach should be applied throughout the design process. These fantasy insect sketches are based on mood boards that feature images of different insect species, because my creature is heavily influenced by bugs. The more I paint these fantastical extrapolations of real-world creatures, the more familiar I'll be with what actually exists on Earth. This will help me create a believable creature in the end.

15 ANATOMICAL LANDMARKS
Throughout my years of designing creatures, one aspect that I can't stress enough is developing good anatomy to support your creature design. Without accurate and believable anatomy, you might as well stop sketching your creature until you learn to study this one crucial element. Earlier in my Establishing Anatomy tip section, you can see the depths I go into when designing a creature. One thing I tell my students is by studying the skeletal and muscular structure of today's animals, you can bring a wonderful sense of familiarity and believability to your creations all at once.

16 FINAL SKETCH
I combine all of the stages of my design process into a single sketch. A side view keeps things simple and can show enough of the creature to get a sense of its proportions, textures, and build. Don't limit yourself to just doing a side view, though. A front three-quarter view is also effective and can show anatomy as well. When making your final sketch, think about what story you want to tell the audience. Is your creature believable? If so, you've done your job as a creature concept artist.

Procreate

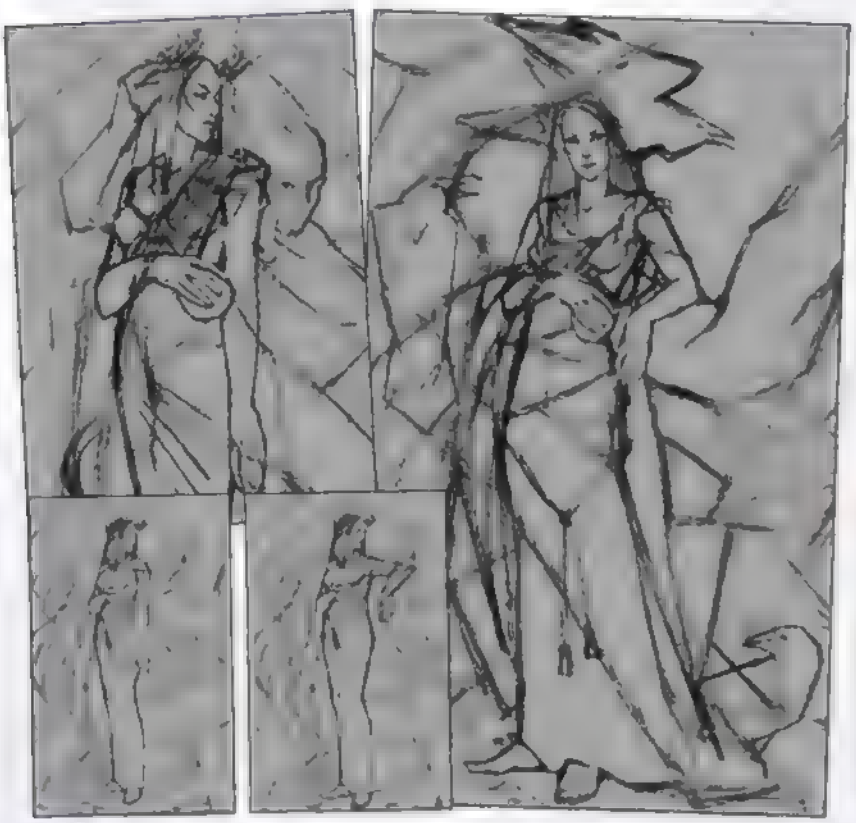
DRAW A DRAMATIC FEMALE FIGURE

Tatiana Svistunova walks you through her workflow and explores some of the new amazing features in Procreate 4

I've spent most of my life as a traditional artist, working with techniques that range from fine arts to various printing techniques. Moving into digital art was a huge step for me, mostly because using a tablet gives you a different experience compared to pencils and paper.

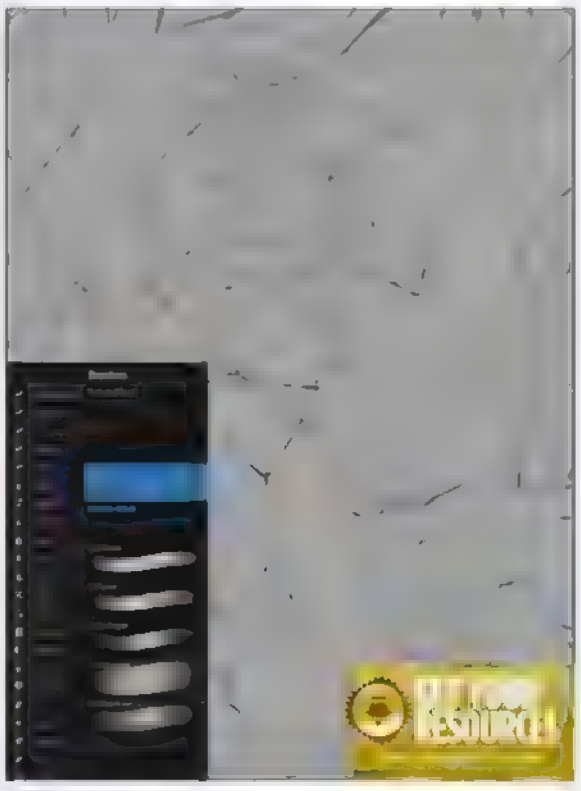
When I first discovered Procreate I was stunned by the idea of having a portable device that enabled me to paint digitally. Over the years Procreate has transformed from a great drawing app to a professional tool. Nowadays, I do most of my work in Procreate, using an iPad Pro and Apple Pencil. Yet there are a few things I still do in Photoshop, such as cropping, resizing and preparing the image for publishing.

In this workshop, I'll be drawing a Roman-inspired woman in her garden accompanied by three ravens. I'll show you the full process of how I produce paintings using an iPad and Procreate. We'll also try some of the interesting new features introduced in Procreate 4, such as Wet Mix. I believe this workshop will be of interest for people who have moved from traditional to digital art, but also for those artists who are keen to see what can you achieve using modern tablets.



1 Sketching an idea

I create a few rough sketches, trying out different ideas, compositions and poses of the character. Once I produce a sketch I'm happy with, I set up a new canvas filled with medium-dark grey and copy the sketch on to it. Then I resize it slightly to ensure that the proportions work better on the canvas.

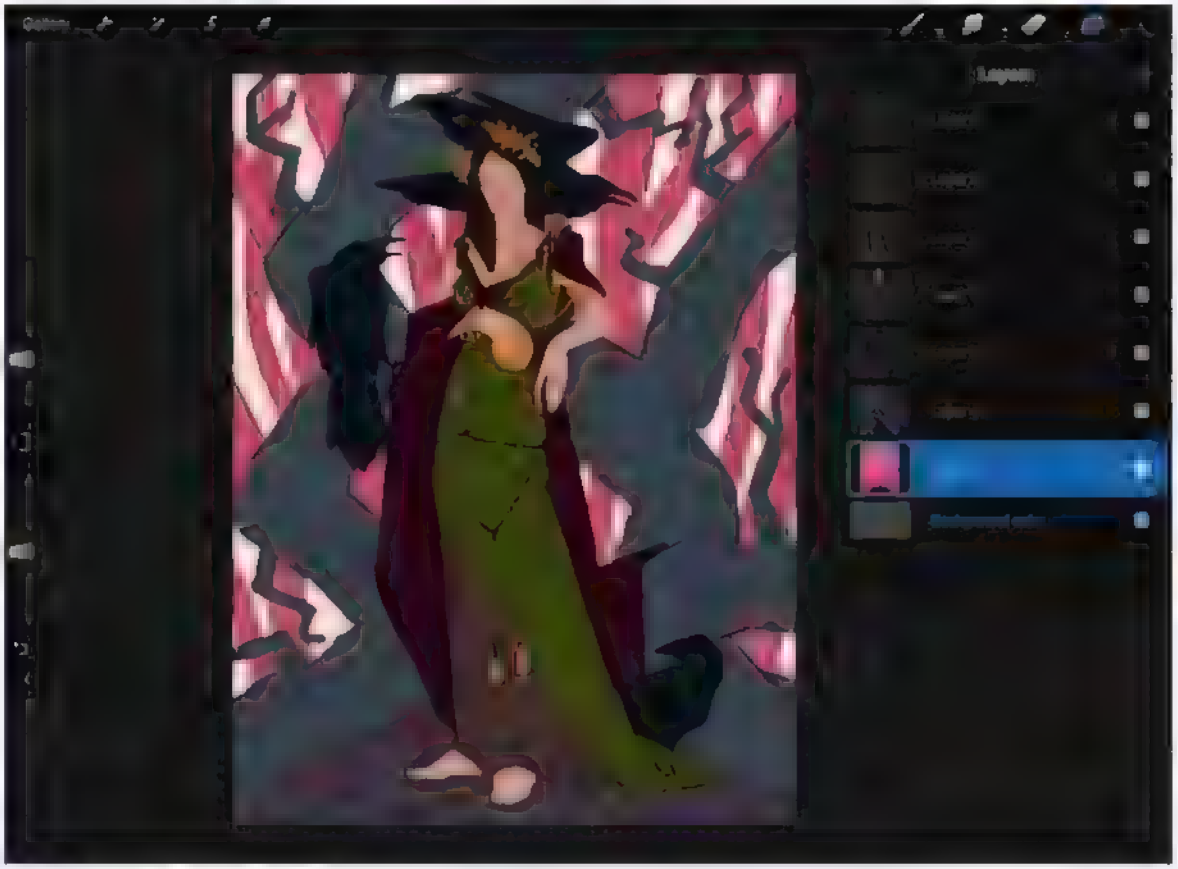


2 Putting in the solid lines

I start the painting by drawing solid lines on top of the chosen sketch. Then I create a new layer and draw the outlines using a standard Procreate 6B pencil brush. I don't think about any details – I'm only drawing on the character and main objects in the painting.

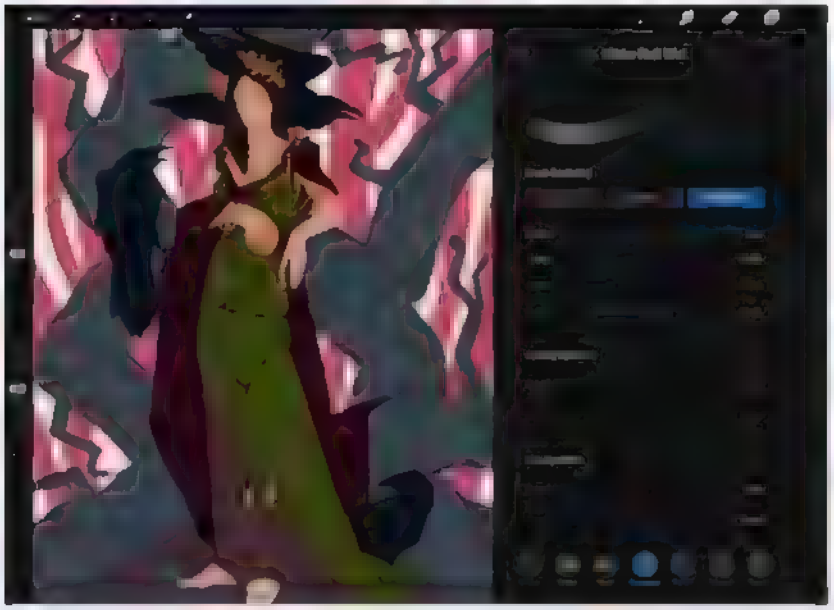
PRO SECRETS

WORKSHOP BRUSHES



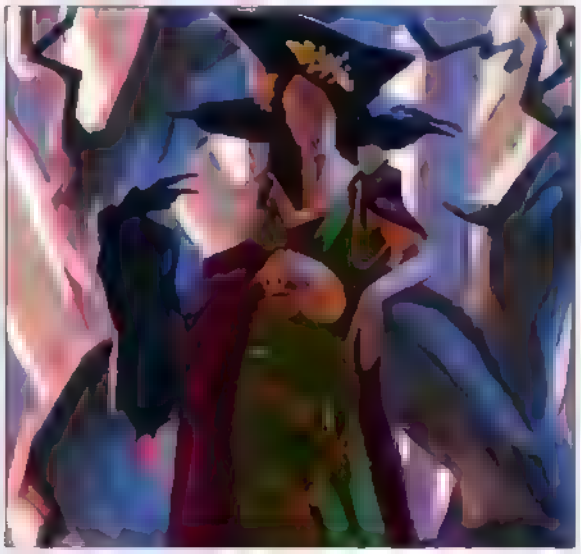
3 Introducing a local colour

I want to apply local colour – the real colour of objects not affected by lighting or shadows. Having a local colour will help me to correctly apply light and shadows later on, while retaining my intended colour of all objects. I create a new layer for each group of objects (main character, ravens, tree and the background) and add colour in each layer



4 Setting up a Wet Mix in Procreate 4

Most of the time, I only use two or three brushes. Procreate 4 has introduced a new feature called Wet Mix that makes any brush look like it was used on a real wet painting. I think that using it will make the painting look soft and more realistic, especially in the background. To enable Wet Mix I tap on the brush and in the Settings menu select Dynamics and Wet Mix.

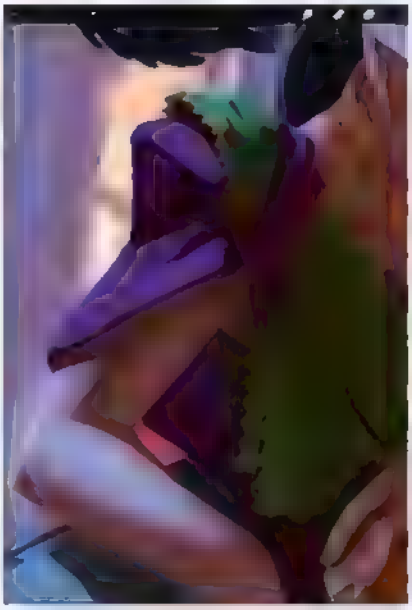


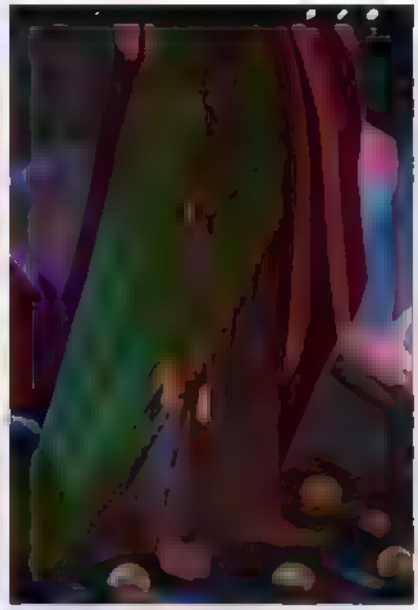
5 Light and shadows

I want to have two light sources: a cold blue as the main light and warm light as a secondary. This will help me to show off the shape and structure of all my objects. I enable alpha lock on each of layers that I've painted a local colour on, then start quickly drawing the light and shadows without too many details. Using alpha lock prevents me from drawing outside of the layer's content.

6 Anatomy considerations

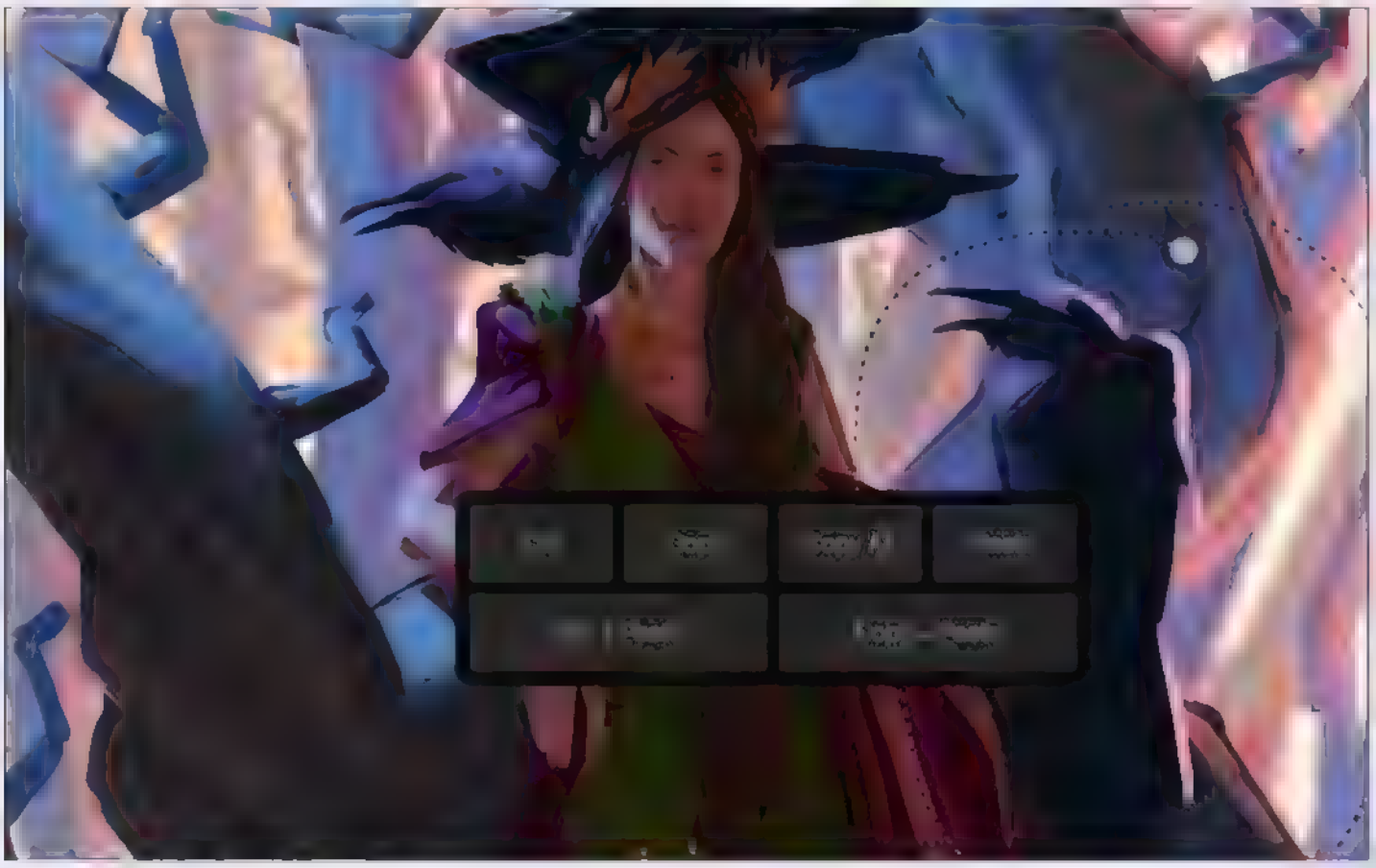
I move on to the main character and start drawing her face and clothes. I mirror the picture so that I can control the proportions of her face and correct any early anatomy mistakes. Always try to take advantage of your digital art tools. For example, instead of drawing the character's second eye from scratch, I just copy the first one and use it as a base.





7 Adding a pattern to the character's clothes

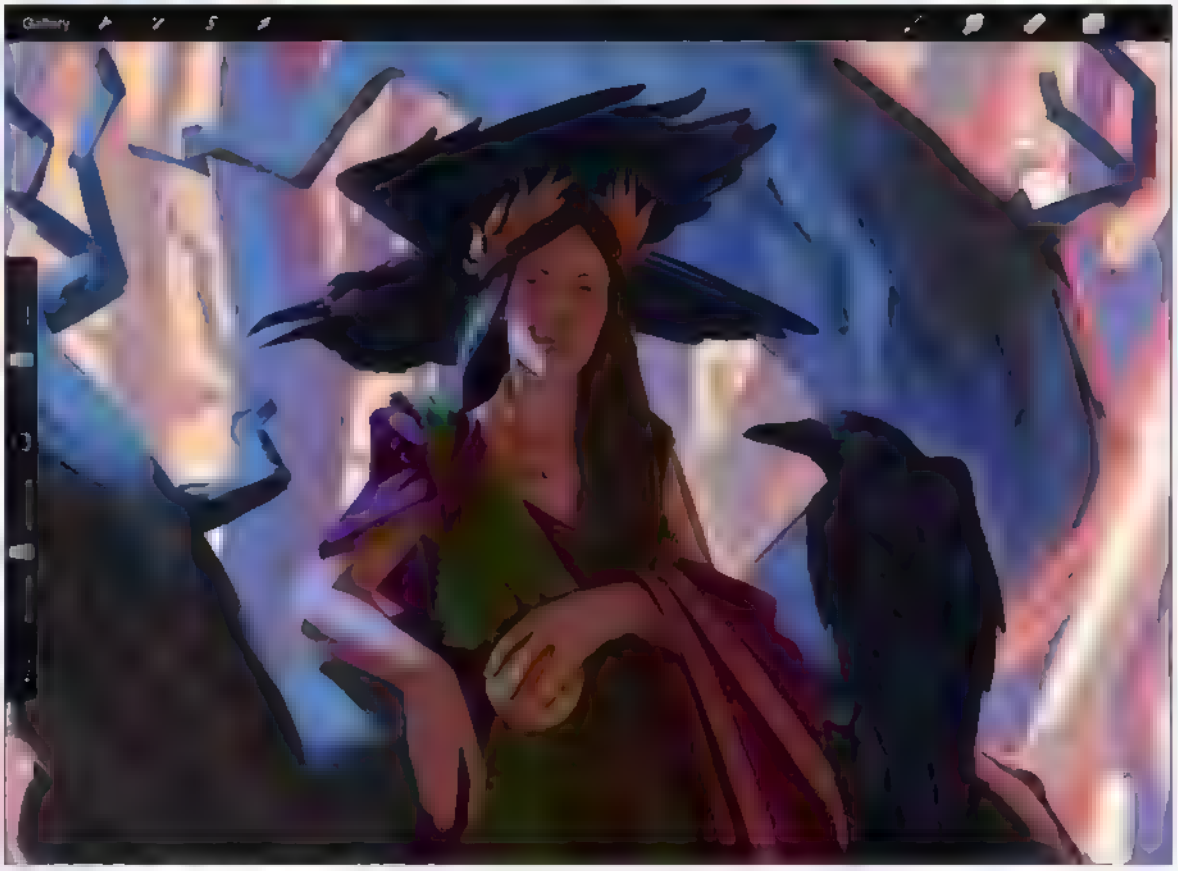
I create a new layer and start drawing the pattern without light and shadows. After I'm happy with the pattern's look, I tap on the layer, choose Select and create a new layer with the selection preserved. Now I start to paint over the selection, bearing in mind light and shadow. When working with the patterns, you should always keep in mind that a pattern will follow all folds and creases on the fabric



8 Moving on to the ravens

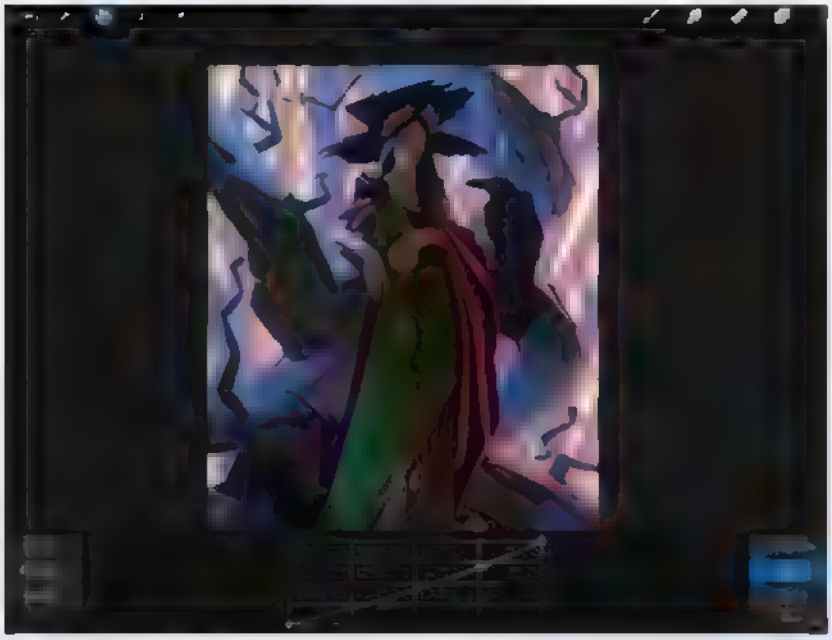
All three ravens are on the same layer, so I need to move each one on to separate layers I select them using the Selection Tool, open the Transformation toolbar, and cut and paste the selection to a new layer I move and resize them until I'm happy with the composition ➤➤

PRO SECRETS



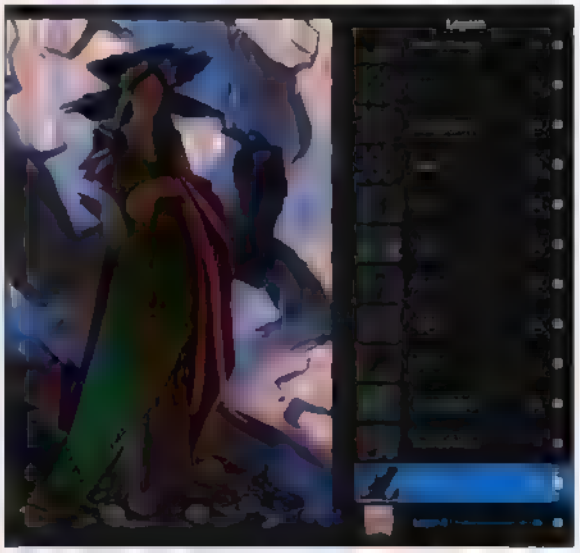
9 Making use of raven references

I assemble some raven reference photos into a single image, open the reference board image in Photos and keep it open using the iPad's Slide Over mode. Previously, you could only put a secondary app on the right hand side, which was uncomfortable for right-handed users. iOS 11 enables you to rearrange the position of the secondary app



10 Adjusting curves

I zoom out of the picture to check I'm happy with the progress I've made. I think that the main character is too bright for this type of lighting and her skin tone is too pink. I tap a Magic Wand icon on the top-left corner of the screen and choose Curves. I select Red channel and slide the curve down to reduce the red

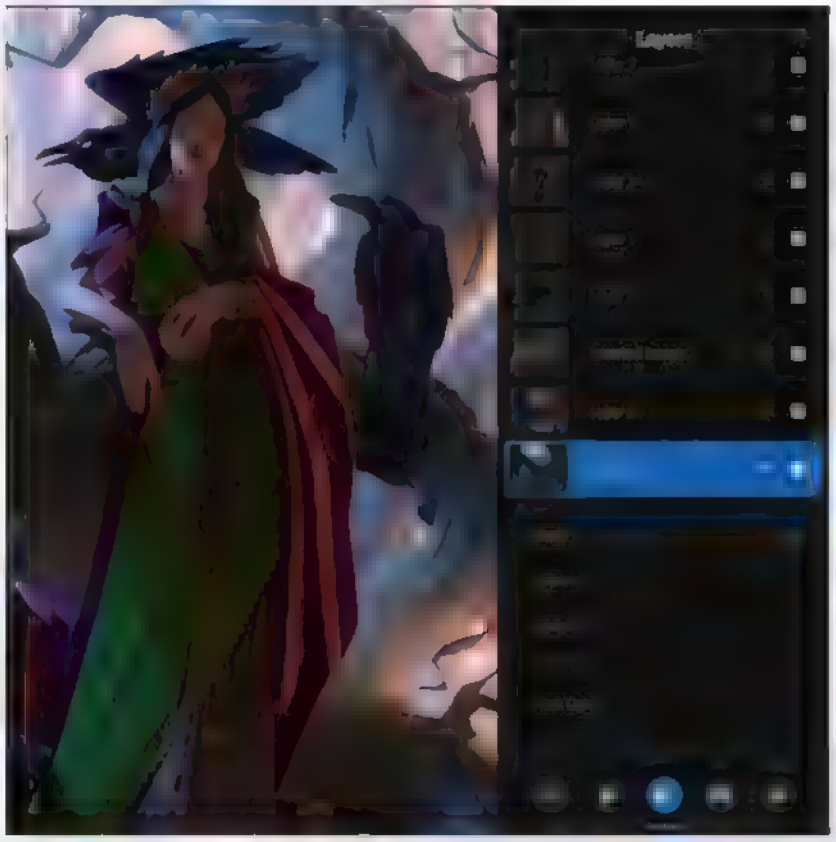


11 Developing background depth

The background is a forest in the golden light with no sharp edges but only a silhouettes of trees. I think it's the perfect part of the painting to use the new wet brushes. First I draw the background. Then I add a few branches between the background and the main tree to create a mid-ground and give the image even more depth. I use lighter values for the mid-ground to show the distance

12 Rendering the tree

The last part of the illustration is the tree that the main character leans on. After rendering the tree, I feel that it looks too cold compared to other objects in the scene, so I duplicate the layer with the tree and reduce the blue colour cast using Curves. The tree trunks in the mid-ground should be lighter than the main tree, so I remove all changes made to mid-ground trees from this layer



13 Finishing with the lighting

Now I want to make the light more intense. I create two layers and switching them to use Hard Light mode by tapping the "N" character near the right-hand side of the layer, then choose Contrast. Using a soft Airbrush I add a few rays of light. I then lower the opacity of these two layers to enhance the realism

14 Adding final details

After I've finished my painting, I leave it for a few hours before I add any final touches. This helps me to look at it with fresh eyes. It's even better to come back to it the following day. I decide to add a few strokes to the main character's tiara, bring in more details on the tree and make the background a little bit less saturated and bright

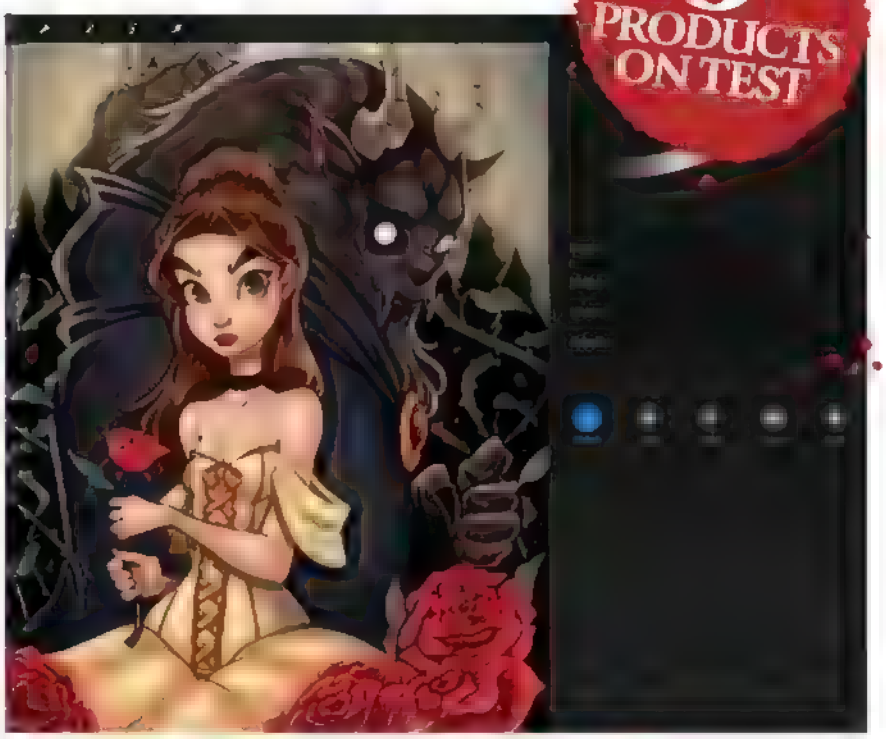
PRO SECRETS

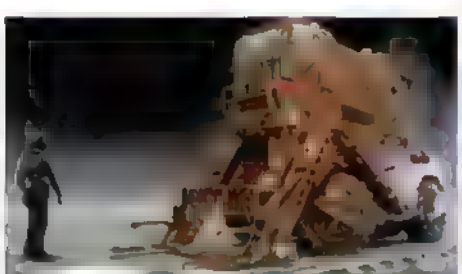
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX Reviews

Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...





SOFTWARE

92 Procreate 4
If you have an iPad and Apple Pencil, then it makes sense to purchase the latest version of this painting app... or does it?

TRAINING

95 Practical Vehicle Design For Film And Television
In Matthew Savage's instructional video, the concept artist uses 3D and 2D tools to develop a futuristic truck design.

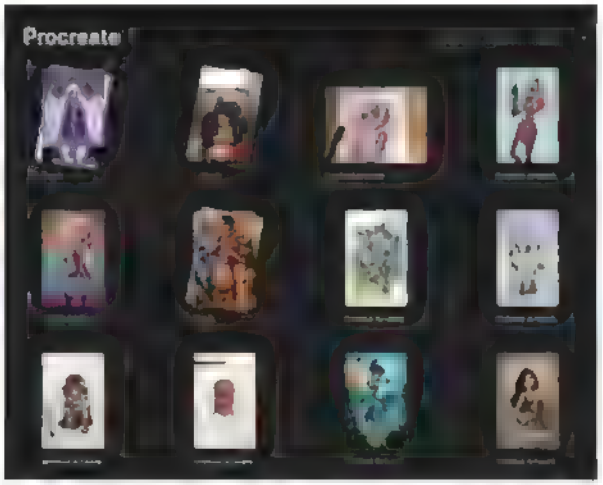
BOOKS

96 The Movie Art of Syd Mead: Visual Futurist
Pore over cinematic visions of the future – from Blade Runner, to Aliens and more – as imagined by the concept art legend.

97 The Color of Pixar
Key frames from Pixar's entire film output are organised according to their dominant colours, for your viewing pleasure.

97 They Drew as They Pleased: The Hidden Art of Disney's Golden Age: The 1940s – Part 2
See some of Disney's familiar – and unfamiliar – characters in a new light, and read about how the studio artists worked.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★ Great ★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious



The Gallery menu makes it straightforward to manage and organise stacks of your artwork, and you can drag files to export them to other programs

Procreate 4

NEW GO-TO Procreate is back with a new paint engine that make it a must-have app, says artist **Chrissie Zullo**

Price £7.50 or free for existing users **Company** Savage Interactive **Web** www.procreate.art

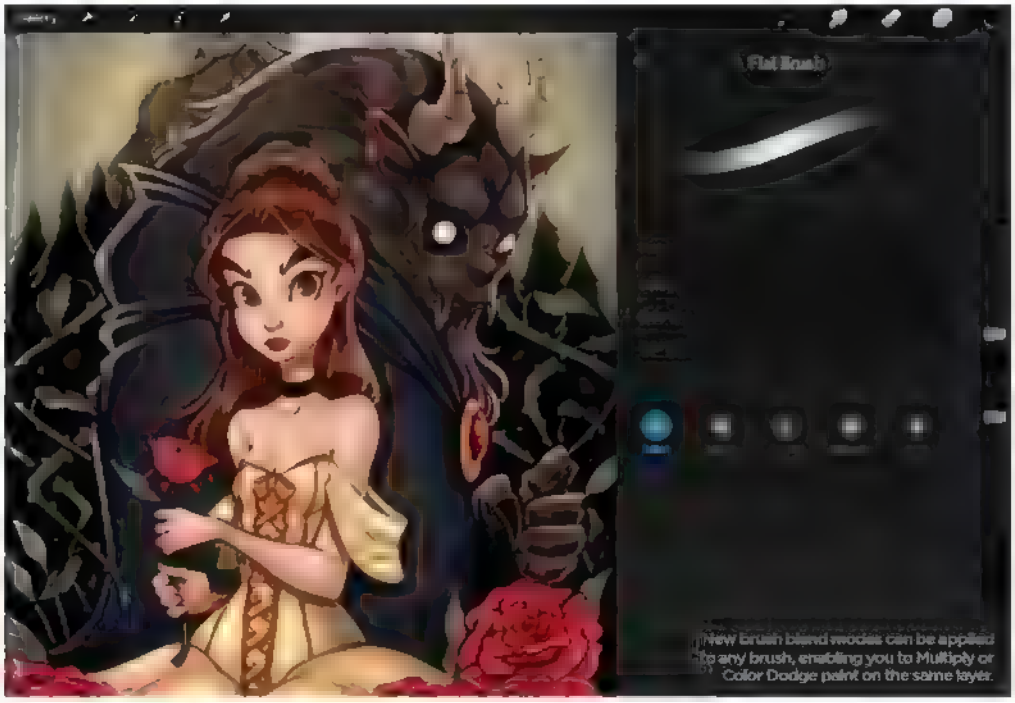
Procreate is a powerful digital sketching and painting application created for the iPad, giving amateur and professional artists alike a creative app that's comparable to high-end competitors. The new Silica M painting engine has been engineered specifically to utilise the power of the iPad and the sensitivity of the Apple Pencil, giving artists an incredibly comfortable and responsive life-like drawing and painting experience.

Built for iOS 11, Procreate 4 is back with a familiar-but-new interface that expands from previous versions. The changes feel accommodating, and you'll soon forget whether they'd been there all along. Most noticeably different is the Brush interface: brushes are now selected from a new organised navigation menu. There are also new brush customisation options and blending modes. For example, brushes can be set to Multiply instead of opening a new Multiply layer, and brush settings can be changed from Normal to Glazed or Wet Mix mode for a different painting experience.

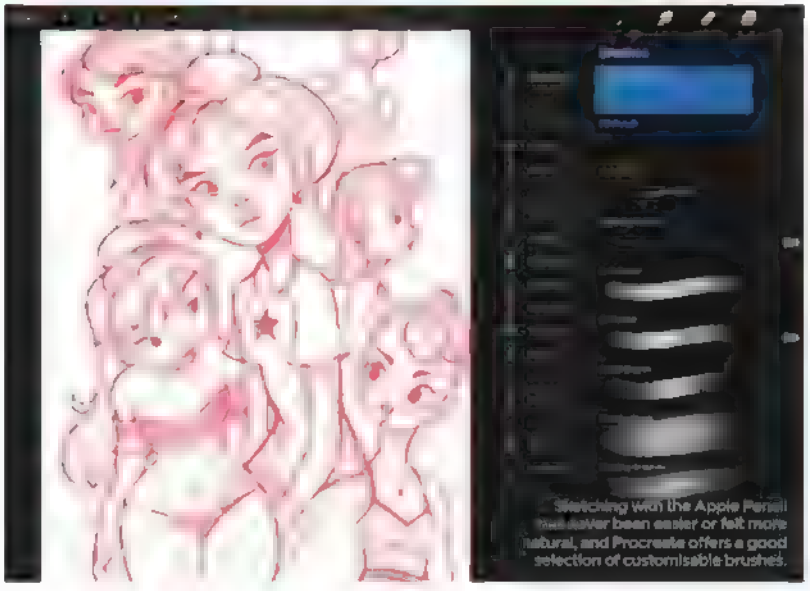
> "Procreate's changes feel accommodating, and you'll soon forget whether they'd been there all along"

Uploading new brushes has also never been easier: simply drag your brush files into the Procreate app. Indeed, the app's Drag and Drop feature makes it especially easy to pull other files too, such as simply dragging an image from the web browser or a palette from an email and dropping it into Procreate, without having to save the file first.

The new wet paint feature allows for mixing and blending different colours right on the canvas, and the colours react in a realistic manner. Choosing



New brush blend modes can be applied to any brush, enabling you to Multiply or Color Dodge paint on the same layer.


Sketching with the Apple Pencil has never been easier or felt more natural, and Procreate offers a good selection of customisable brushes.

colours has also been better organised into tabs from the Color drop-down menu, with options like choosing from a colour wheel, the classic colour box, a value calculator or a palette menu.

The adjustment options have been enhanced, and now choosing Color Balance, for instance, will offer a more thorough and descriptive menu to keep you from guessing what range or colour is being shifted and adjusted. Layer options have also expanded when single tapping an individual layer, and most noticeable is the new Mask mode. This enables part of an image to be adjusted without changing its original source or shape.

Sketching has also never felt more natural, and using methods like tilting the Apple Pencil will create a soft, shading effect. This makes sketching on the iPad a treat for many artists. Its accessibility and portability gives Procreate a key advantage over other drawing programs. The new P3 Wide Color option in the file menu allows for the super saturation of colours, but still noticeably lacking is a CMYK colour mode.

Overall, this is Procreate's biggest overhaul yet, and fans of the app should feel more than happy with its many improvements, and new users should consider this a must-buy.

DETAILS

ARTIST INTERVIEW

CHRISSIE ZULLO

The illustrator talks about her experience with Procreate 4

Why choose Procreate over other painting programs?
I was looking for other ways to digitally paint without being tied down to a desktop computer. I fell in love with Procreate because it's an app that offers everything I need with an artist-friendly interface, and I can take my iPad anywhere, so it's like drawing in a sketchbook. Coming from a background mostly working in Photoshop, Procreate was an easy transition, and it's now my first choice for colouring my work.

What makes Procreate unique or different?
One of my favourite features is the time-lapse replay. This enables you to watch a playback of your process so far, and it even gives you the option of exporting a video so you can share the recording with friends. Another feature that's uniquely noteworthy is the Apple Pencil's sensitivity; I feel like it's the most realistic drawing stylus yet.

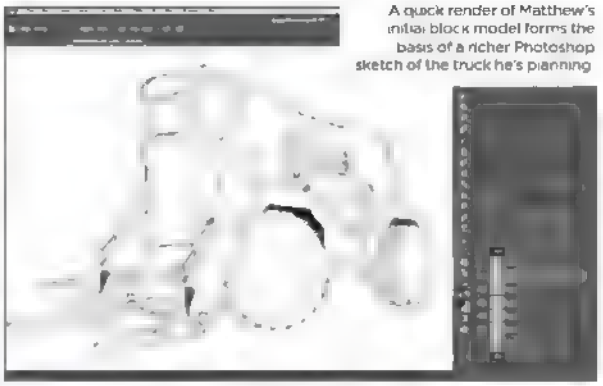
Would you recommend this product to a beginner?
Yes. Procreate's interface is clear and clean and not overwhelming, and invites for exploration of the program without a lengthy new-user tutorial up-front.

What's the one thing you'd change about Procreate?
I still want a CMYK mode or maybe a Gamut warning, because I find myself moving files into another program to make sure the colours are ready for print. Having this option would easily make Procreate a one-stop for all my illustration needs. Other than this, I can't recommend this product enough.

Chrissie is a freelance artist who's worked for DC, Archie Dynamite Comics, Fandango, and Mattel.

www.instagram.com/chrissiezullo

Basic set building and creative lighting gives the truck model a more industrial context



A quick render of Matthew's initial block model forms the basis of a richer Photoshop sketch of the truck he's planning

A extensive session in Modo sees Matthew add textures and materials, enhanced with a quick trick to bring in decal graphics.

Practical Vehicle Design For Film And Television

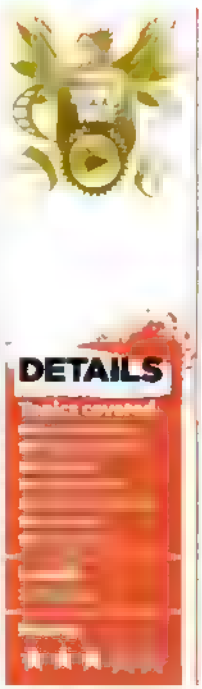
KEEP ON TRUCKIN' Concept artist Matthew Savage delves into the functional side of creating artwork, as he designs a sci-fi truck

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** As part of subscription package (£37/month) **Format** Streaming video **Web** http://ifxm.ag/gm-ws

So much is written about the artistic side of concept art that it's easy to overlook the conceptual side. In concept art, you're presenting a design, so it has to be able to function as well as look good.

Matthew Savage's Practical Vehicle Design video is a great reminder of this golden rule. He works in films, which could mean that his designs could be turned into CG animation – but it could equally mean that the object will be physically built, to be held, worn or used by the actors.

Here, Matthew starts with a blueprint of a real-world truck, explaining how the film's production team could buy up a cheap second-hand model, strip it down and then construct his design over the skeleton. This means some parts of the vehicle design, notably the cabin platform, have to stay fixed in position.



Matthew's workflow is based around Modo with help from Photoshop, and it'll be a familiar process to anyone with some 3D software experience. Yet there are many useful tips for anyone looking to explore the more functional side of concept art, such as using blueprints of the original vehicle as backdrops while you build the revised version. More seasoned 3D artists will appreciate other areas Matthew explores, including an effective hack to add decal graphics to textures without resorting to planar UV maps.

The further you go into the project, the more the work process reverts to conventional practice, with information on rendering and compositing that, while useful, repeats what's available elsewhere. But those first chapters offer a distinctive perspective that has the potential to add a new dimension to your concept art, whether you work in 2D or 3D.

ARTIST PROFILE

MATTHEW SAVAGE

Matthew has been a concept artist for the film and television industry for the past 15 years, producing costumes, props and weapons, vehicles and set designs. He's worked on The Dark Knight, Prince of Persia, Kick-Ass and X-Men: First Class within the art department and Prometheus, Thor: The Dark World and The Martian as part of the costume department. Matthew is now a weapon and prop designer on the Star Wars films.

www.matthewconcept.com

The Movie Art of Syd Mead: Visual Futurist

FORWARD THINKING Immerse yourself in this in-depth ride through the career of the art legend who brought us new visions of the future

Author Syd Mead and Craig Hodgetts **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Whether they know it or not, every concept artist working today has been influenced by the 1982 film Blade Runner. Its dystopian scenes of a futuristic LA were like nothing audiences had ever seen before. And that was largely down to the unique vision of one man: futuristic artist and industrial designer Syd Mead.

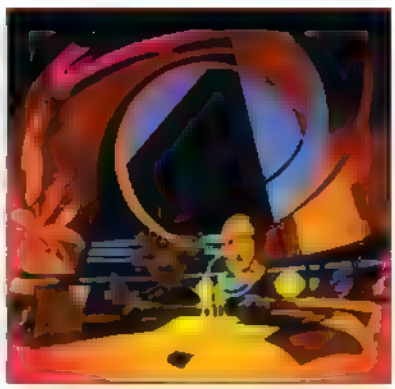
Syd has become famous for his work on films such as Blade Runner, TRON, Aliens and this year's Blade Runner 2049. And given the number of productions he's been a part of, it would have been easy to fill this book with overfamiliar film stills and press photography. Syd's name is so influential, it still would have sold well.

All credit to Titan Books, then, that it's created something every fan of his film work will treasure. This 300-page hardback not only packs in the most extensive collection of the artist's work ever to appear in print, it also curates, presents and explains it all quite beautifully. Indeed, there's wall-to-wall artwork, much of it previously unpublished. From rough sketches through to full 3D concept art, everything included serves to illuminate Syd's process, so it's not just about eye candy but a real way to analyse the way he thinks.

> "Packs in the most extensive collection of the artist's work ever to appear in print"

The colour scheme is the only familiar aspect of Syd's futuristic, battered taxi design for 1982's Blade Runner

The text goes into great detail, but is short and snappy enough to be enjoyable, and constantly punctuated with 'ah-ha!' moments. We were fascinated to learn, for example, that Deckard's apartment in Blade Runner was inspired by a stainless steel train toilet. And that while reading the script for 2003's The Core, the artist realised that the drilling machine central to its plot had an engineering flaw. He then fixed the flaw, and Syd's design solution features in the movie.



The darker palette of Syd's designs for The Jetsons is an unusual take on the cartoon source material.

The book includes some of the smaller movies Syd worked on, including an unfinished reboot of The Jetsons under Rob Minkoff. These sections are often the most enlightening, dealing with subject matter that only the most hardcore fans will be familiar with.

Given the timings, it's surprising that Titan Books has also managed to get Syd's concept artwork for Blade Runner 2049 included, in the last few pages at the end. All in all, this is virtually a perfect example of how a movie art book should be done.

RATING ★★★★★

The Color of Pixar

PALETTE CLEANSER A book that's chock-full of individual frames from Pixar movies, grouped according to their dominant colours

Author Tia Kratter **Publisher** Chronicle Books **Price** £22 **Web** www.chronicklebooks.com **Available** Now

Ever stood in an art gallery and spent ages gazing at a painting? Then consider how, as John Lasseter notes in the foreword, an animation frame typically appears for just 1/24 of a second. "But each one is a work of art in itself," he points out, and so this 152-page book offers a way to right the balance.

Following the brief foreword and introduction, what you get here is a

This still from Inside Out features – perhaps unsurprisingly – in the book's blue section

series of beautiful frames from Pixar's films, one per page. And beyond the name of the film (the likes of WALL-E, A Bug's Life, Monsters Inc, Finding Nemo, Cars, Toy Story, Up and Inside Out), that's all the text there is.

What's unique here is how Tia Kratter – who works as a shader art director for Pixar – has picked which frames to feature. As she explains in her introduction, the images are grouped together not by film but according to their dominant colour, so if you turn the book onto its side, it resembles a rainbow.

We're not entirely convinced how useful this is as an exercise, but that hardly matters. What you get is a hundreds of iconic-looking Pixar artworks to immerse yourself in, and if that's your bag, then you're certain to love this book.

RATING ★★★☆☆

They Drew as They Pleased: The Hidden Art of Disney's Golden Age: The 1940s – Part Two

ROARING FORTIES Some familiar – and unfamiliar – characters appear in this comprehensive study of a pivotal period in Disney's history

Author Didier Ghez **Publisher** Chronicle Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.chronicklebooks.com **Available** Now

Since he was a teenager in the 1980s, Didier Ghez's been researching and writing everything Disney, from its animations to its merchandise, its politics to its theme parks. That sense of authority pervades this analysis of the company's third decade.

The book's main focus is the creation of the Character Model

Early character designs for Captain Hook portrayed Peter Pan's arch-nemesis as a less-threatening figure

Department. Radically, the artists here were free to use any artistic medium they wanted and encouraged to indulge in self-expression. What they created wouldn't appear on screen, but would serve as inspiration for the 'working' animators, such as Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston. The latter, in turn, often complained that the work done by this new department couldn't easily be applied to their animations.

It all makes for a fascinating read, and the artwork on display is pretty eye-opening too. Sketches, doodles, drawings and paintings provide a strikingly different take on popular characters that haves never really been shown in this way before. A thrilling, must-read for Disney enthusiasts everywhere.

RATING ★★★★★

LIFE...WHERE'S THE PAUSE BUTTON?

With so many demands from work, home and family, there never seem to be enough hours in the day for you. Why not press pause once in a while, curl up with your favourite magazine and put a little oasis of 'you' in your day?

PRESS PAUSE
ENJOY A MAGAZINE MOMENT

To find out more about Press Pause visit:

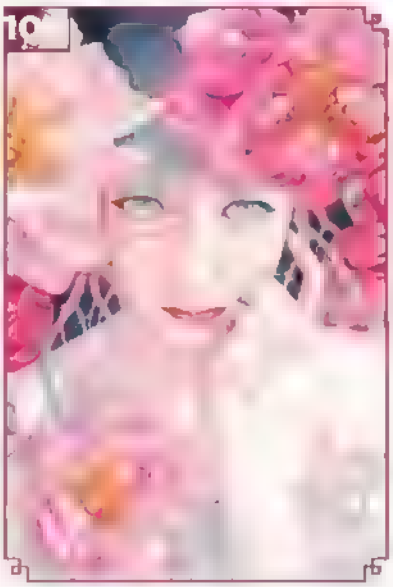
pauseyourday.co.uk

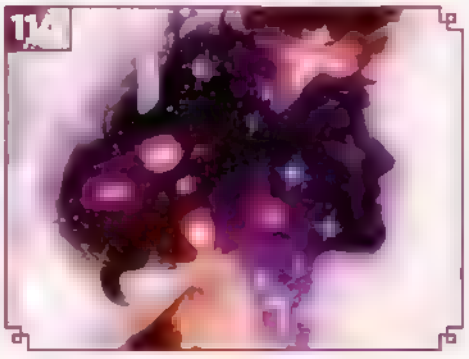
Workshops assets are available...
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists





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Artwork from some of the finest traditional artists around today.

104 Workshop: Mix digital and traditional tools
Medieval fantasy artist Chris Casciano combines painting techniques to create a realistic knight with an abstract angle.

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Laura Bifano demonstrates three different kinds of friskets and how they can be used with any water-based medium.

114 First Impressions: Rob Rey
Discover why the stars are this illustrator's destination – at least on the canvas.

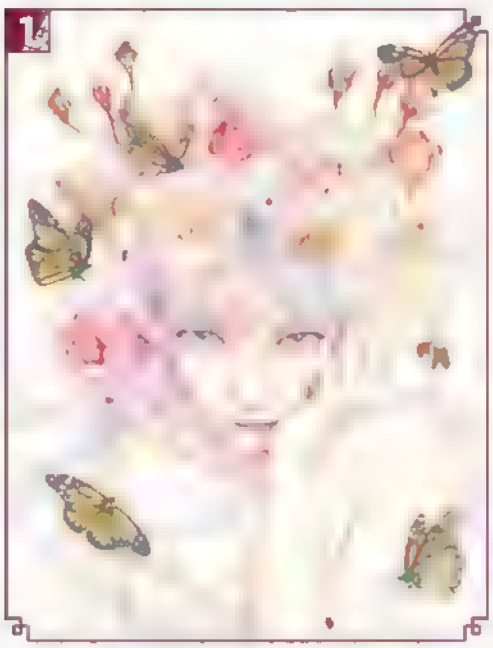
FXPosé

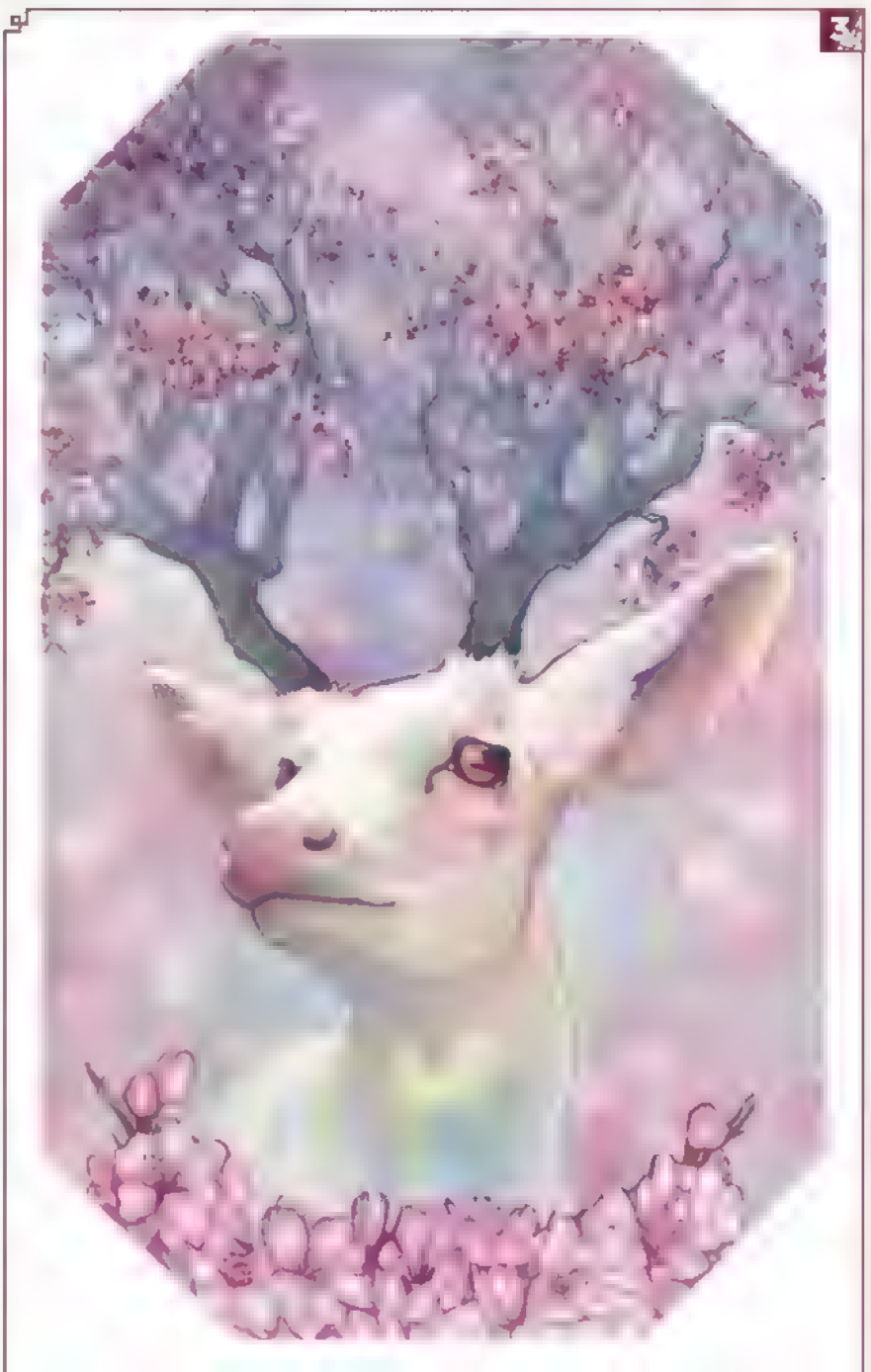
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Tracy Lewis

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache **WEB:** www.tracylewisart.com

Tracy draws inspiration from Art Nouveau, symbolism and the cycle of life and death. She teaches classes at her studio Alchemy and workshops around the world.





1 MARIPOSA
"As with most of my paintings, the flowers and branches here are less of an adornment, more of a physical manifestation of the figure's inner desires; a oneness between flora and fauna."

2 BLOOMING
"This represents the lushness of late spring. The white roses were created using layers of pink, blue and yellow, and I painted the background wet into wet, lifting circles of dappled light."

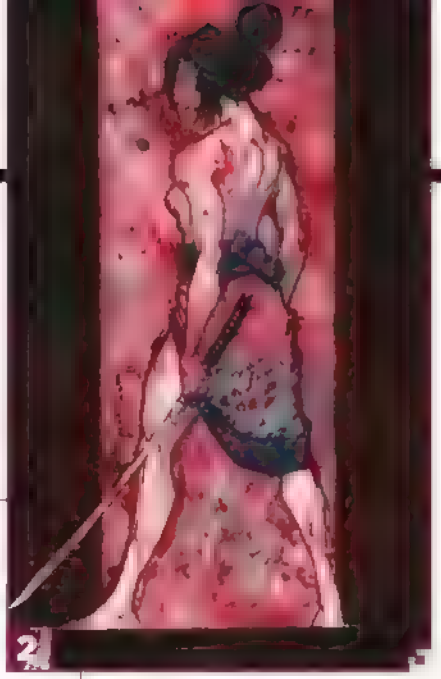
3 FLEETING
"The albino deer and cherry blossoms represent the ephemeral qua ity of life. I painted this with several glazes of transparent watercolour, and then added acryla gouache for the tiny white blossoms."

4 CLANDESTINE
"The compassionate femme fatale. She's a contradiction of disquiet and harmony, of light and darkness, of love and deception. The peonies act as both an invitation and a veil."

Harry Conway

LOCATION: Ireland **MEDIA:** Watercolour, acrylic **WEB:** http://ifxm.ag/harry-conway

Harry is studying illustration at college. He dabbles in digital art, but prefers getting his hands dirty with paint. He's inspired by Japanese folklore and history.

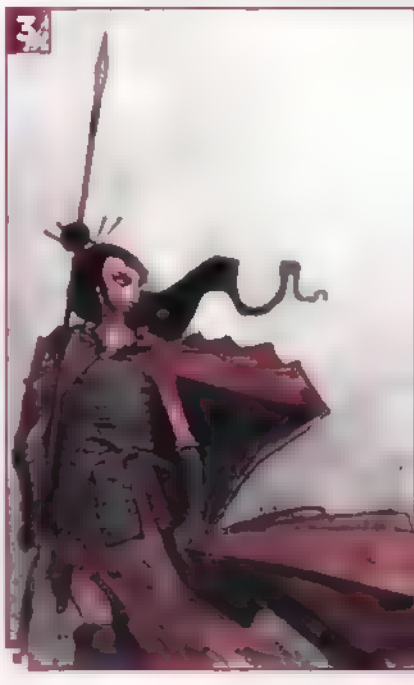


1 TOMOE GOZEN

"This is a watercolour painting created after my first year of college. The character was inspired by a real-life female samurai called Tomoe Gozen, who was a Japanese 'Joan of Arc' of sorts "

2 BLOODBATH

"I really indulged in my (worrying) love of blood and gore for this piece, I had just watched Kill Bill and was inspired by Lucy Liu's character, O-Ren Ishii. It was an excuse to dig out my crusty old toothbrush and really go to town with some splatter effects!"

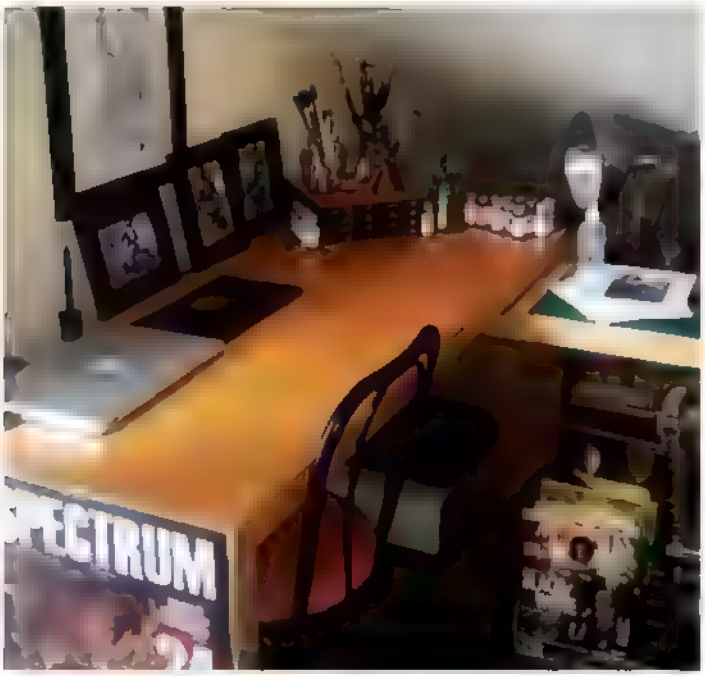


3 **ONNA-BUGEISHA**
"Battle-hardened and fierce, this character is patrolling the outskirts of her village and scanning the horizon for any unfortunate bandit to come her way."

4 **JIGOKU DAYU**
"This is my version of a character from Japanese folklore called the Jigoku Dayu, which translates as 'hell concubine' or 'lady from hell'."

5 **ON THE TRAIL**
"A ranger-type character I created for a personal project. I was just getting the hang of watercolours and I wanted to experiment with a low-key colour palette."

Fancy sharing your traditional art with your fellow readers! [illegible] **fxpose@imaginefx.com**



Watercolour Acrylics

CREATE A REALISTIC FANTASY KNIGHT

See how medieval fantasy artist CHRIS CASCIANO uses a unique digital and traditional painting technique to create realistic knights with an abstract approach

Hello dear reader! In this workshop, I'll be taking you through my process on how I create an illustration of a knight as I use Photoshop to guide me through painting with traditional media. I've spent the majority of 2017 illustrating these knights. In fact, you're about to witness my eighth knight this year!

In the past, most of my art was freelance work for various board or trading card gaming companies During this time, my work was almost exclusively digital. It was easier to make changes, fix mistakes and paint faster in order to meet those pesky deadlines.

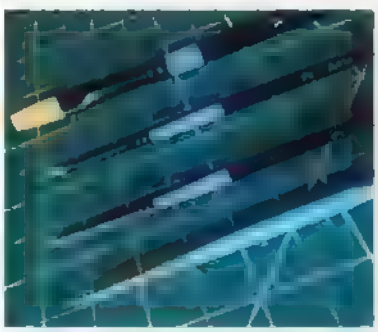
Although I loved what I was doing, something was missing. I didn't have an original work of art to hold onto at the end of a painting. So I took my knowledge of Photoshop and used it to digitally plan out my composition, values and colour as I illustrated medieval knights. I could then refer to this digital study as I worked my way through a traditional painting with acrylic and watercolours.

There are specific things you can achieve digitally that you can't with traditional media, and vice versa. When I work exclusively with Photoshop, I find myself wishing that I was sat in front of the canvas and painting traditionally, but when I painted, I craved to use the many tricks I have come to learn digitally. So I now use both. Let me show you how I do it!

ART ST INSIGHT

BLACK PAINT IS EVIL

So many young artists use black for their shadows. It dulls your colours and makes your painting flat. Instead, mix a few different dark colours together. I usually use a combination of Alizarin crimson, Ultramarine blue and Raw umber. It'll add interest and give your painting life.



Chris is a medieval fantasy artist and illustrator. He also teaches illustration as a High School art instructor in Syracuse, New York. Outside of art, Chris loves playing basketball, napping and eating french fries. You can see more of his art at www.casciano art.com.

MATERIALS

BOARD/PAPER
- Crescent Hot Pressed illustration board
- EPSON Enhanced matte paper

BRUSHES
- Artist's Loft Flat sizes 0, 2 and 10
- Dynasty Round size 000
- Mop brush

WATERCOLOUR PAINT
- Prang Watercolor paint cake (set of eight)

WATERCOLOUR MATERIALS
- Fine salt
- Sea salt
- Rubbing alcohol
- Plastic wrap

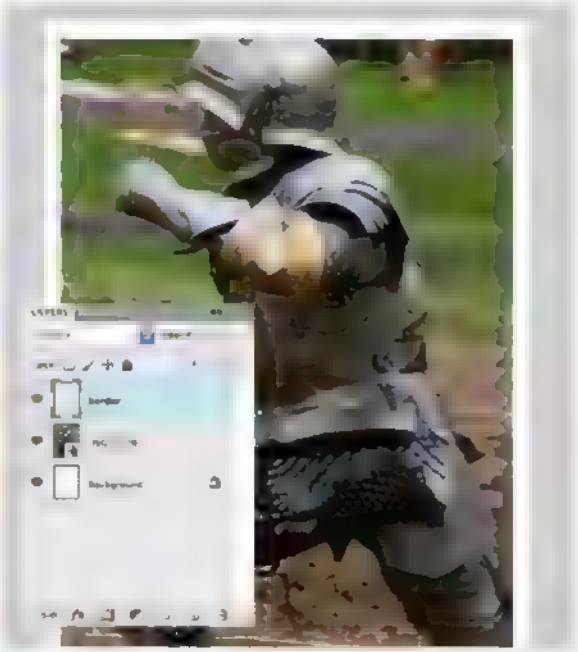
GOLDEN FLUID ACRYLICS
- Alizarin crimson
- Burnt sienna
- Cobalt turquoise
- Naphthol red light
- Naples yellow hue
- Paynes gray
- Permanent violet dark
- Prussian blue
- Pyrrole orange
- Raw umber
- Titanium white
- Ultramarine blue
- Yellow ochre

LYRA PENCILS
- HB, 2B and 4B

MISCELLANEOUS
- Golden moulding paste
- Golden matte medium
- Toothbrush
- Blender tool
- Kneaded eraser
- Foam brush
- Q-tip

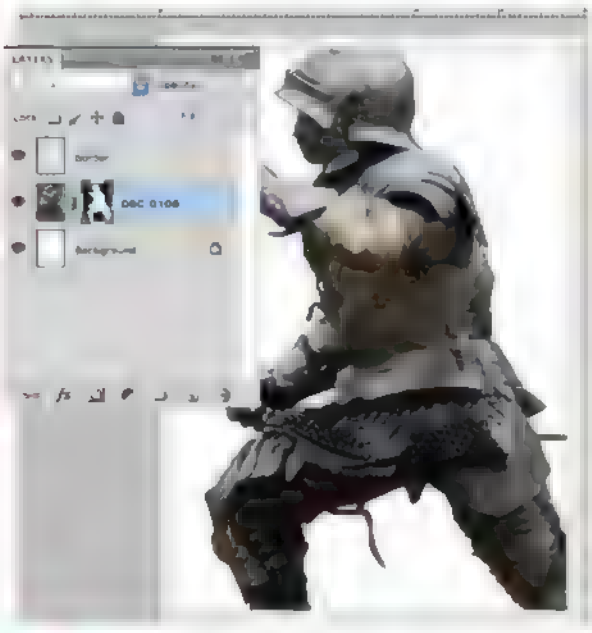
1 Obtain photo reference

I've been going to local Renaissance festivals every summer for my entire life. Each time I go, I take hundreds of photographs to use as reference for my artwork. I don't go into it thinking, "I need this exact pose from this knight for my next illustration". I just make sure I take pictures of everything. I photograph the buildings, the costumes, and of course the armoured joust!



2 Plan the composition in Photoshop

I open a 5x7-inch Photoshop document and create a 1/4-inch border. This will be the exact size of my painting. I create a border layer and set it on top, because when I put the final painting into a frame, it crops off about a 1/4-inch of my painting on all sides. Then I drag in my reference underneath the border, and rotate and resize it until the composition is to my liking



3 Mask the background

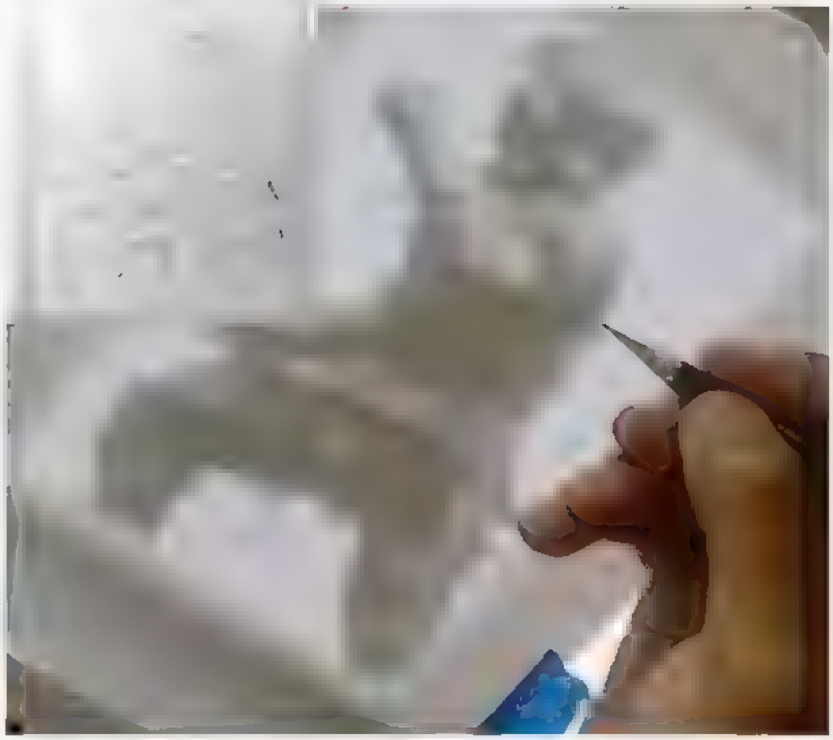
Now I have to get rid of the grassy knoll with all the small children picking their noses and burly men eating turkey legs. I create a mask on the same layer as the photo reference and erase the background with a Photoshop brush that has soft edges. I use a mask rather than an eraser so that I can add or take away things without them being lost forever

4 More photo reference

I now realise that this knight would look a lot cooler with a sword in his right hand. So I steal my brother's collectible The Lord of the Rings sword and position my hand exactly how it should look if the knight were holding it. Then I create a new layer, resize the sword and mask out the background.

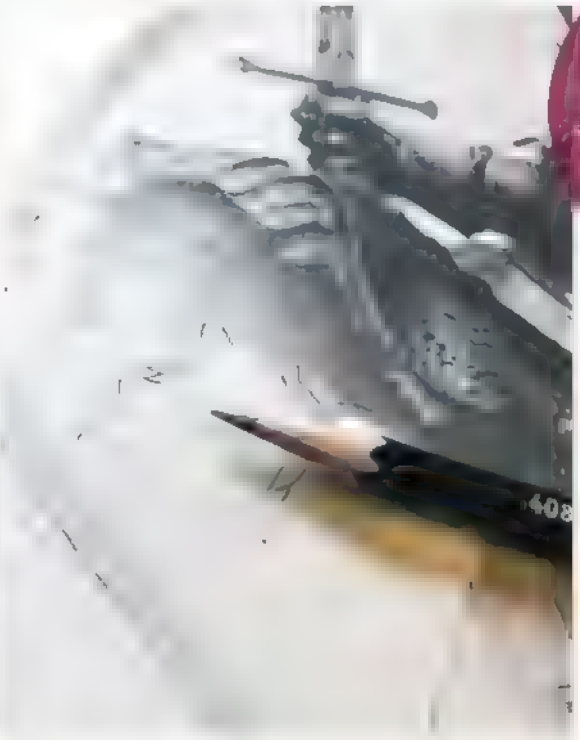
5 Choose a focal point

I switch the image over to greyscale and consider the focal point. Which area of the painting should I focus on the most? In this case, it's the centre of the image (the pauldron/breast plate area). Therefore, no other area should achieve a higher level of contrast or detail. To remind myself of this, I create a transparent and white radial gradient. This fades off the less-important areas.



6 Identify landmarks

Next, I use my computer screen as a make-shift lightbox and tape up my drawing paper. I'm not just tracing the image like a robot – I'm trying to find the most important visual landmarks so that I can effectively draw this knight to accurate proportion and scale.



SPLATTER!
Water down your paint and use a toothbrush to add some splatter effects. It looks great!

ARTIST INSIGHT

YOU'VE GOT YOUR REFERENCE.. USE IT!
No matter your style, reference can be extremely informative. Have your photo references in front of you at all times while you work, and look at it! Don't paint/draw while looking only at your artwork. Your reference will supply you with details that you would have otherwise never noticed. Don't assume what something looks like. Actually look at it!

7 Use pencils to produce a value study

Using the initial landmarked lines as my starting point, I use HB, 2B and 4B pencils with a blender tool to start my drawing. I begin at the top of the page and work my way down. I'm trying to get the values as accurate as possible at this stage. I have my photo reference in front of me as I work and I constantly refer to it while drawing ➤➤

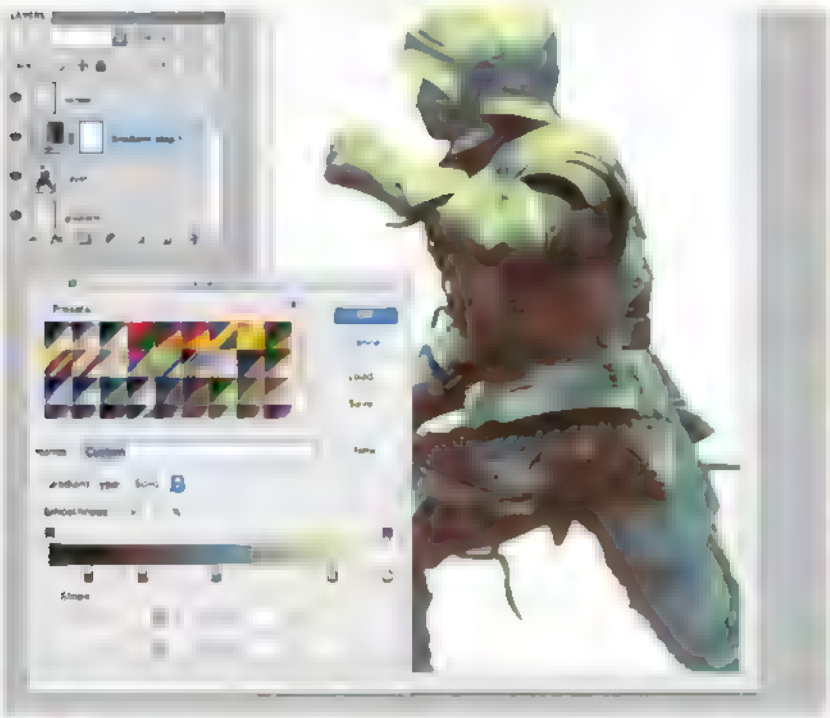
ARTIST INSIGHT

MAKE TIME TO PAINT WHAT YOU LOVE

Early in my career, I was unhappily stuck painting things for other people. Or I might have created paintings because I thought it would be popular or sell well. Don't do it! Paint whatever you want. If you're passionate about your artwork, then others will be, too.

8 *Preparing to paint*

I scan the drawing and bring it into Photoshop. I go to Filter>Noise>Median. This will smooth out my pencil strokes and make the drawing more aesthetically photographic. Sometimes I even overlay the original photo on top of certain areas because I want the armour to look as realistic and functional as possible. I then produce a Giclée print and mount it to board with a combination of Moulding paste and Matte medium.



9 *What colours should I use?*

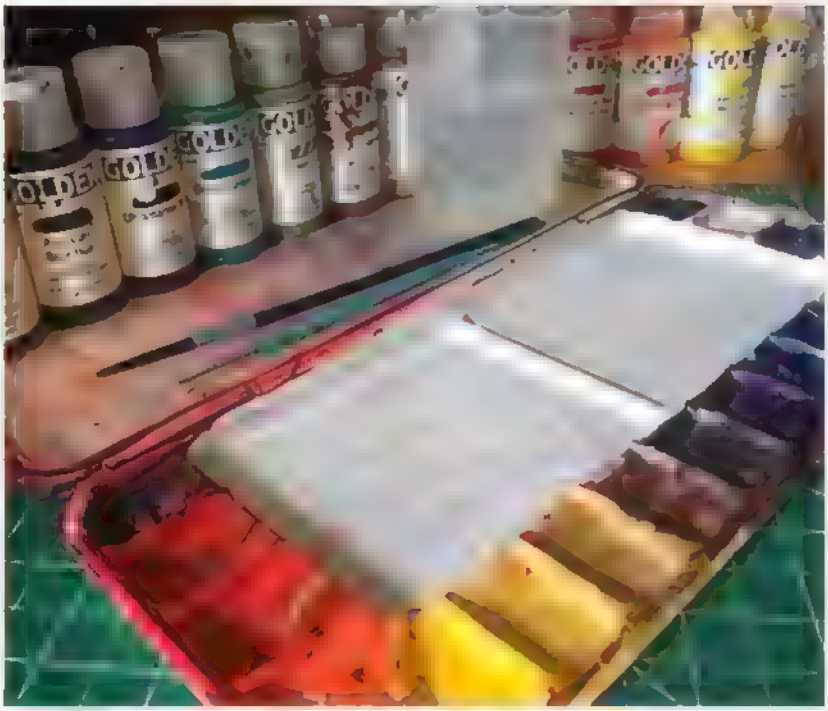
Now I'm ready to paint, but what colours do I use!? The beauty of Photoshop is that it enables me to try a whole bunch of them out before I paint traditionally. First I create a Gradient Map on top of the greyscale image, mess around with different colours, and adjust the sliders until I get them where I want. Then I take the original coloured photo and overlay it in the focal point area.

10 *Achieving texture with watercolour*

I achieve different textures by adding sea salt, table salt, rubbing alcohol and plastic wrap to my watercolour washes. After the first wash is applied, I apply these techniques in a few specific areas. After it's dried, I add a second wash on top and apply some of these techniques again. The watercolour repels the salt and alcohol, leaving interesting textures behind.

11 Tilting my watercolours

At this stage I don't really know what will happen – I just let the watercolour do its thing. I keep the Photoshop colour version in front of me and choose a colour from it. I blob on the colour and tilt the board so that the watercolour flows in the general upper left direction (because the knight is moving that way). I apply my watercolour textures, wait until they dry and repeat.



12 Apply acrylic washes

I seal the watercolour with Matte medium and use Golden Fluid Acrylics to paint on top of the watercolour. Golden's acrylics go on thinner than regular acrylics. This is why I like them. I don't paint with opaque gobs – instead I use a number of transparent thin layers so that I don't lose my value study underneath too quickly.

13 Start at the top

I begin at the top of the illustration board and work my way down. I know many artists who simultaneously work all over the painting at once. I've been known to do this as well, but there's something I like about the feeling of being done with one area before I move on to the next.

14 It's finished!

Towards the end, however, I do work all over the painting. I look for different colours that might unify the piece together and place them throughout the work. I never really know when to stop, so I ask my wife. She's the determiner of all things art and non-art. Once she gives me the 'okay', I'm done ●

Core Skills: Part 5

APPLY FRISKETS TO YOUR GOUACHE ART

Painter and illustrator LAURA BIFANO demonstrates her use of three different kinds of friskets and how they can be used with any water-based medium

Calling something a frisket essentially means that the object or substance prevents paint from going where you don't want it to go. Because I work mainly in gouache, this month's instalment will cover the use of friskets with this medium, but these techniques could also be applied when using watercolour and acrylic.

When working with any water-based media it's sometimes necessary to mask out certain areas of the painting – say, if I wanted to have some brushstrokes continue across a broken shape. It's also handy for masking out small details without having to worry about painting around them. One good example is if I were using the white of the paper as specular highlights in an image While you can paint these effects by hand, using a mask will save a lot of time and effort. I use friskets to preserve an area of the paper for a bright highlight, or to keep a crisp edge on an area of colour.

There are three types of friskets I'll typically use when painting with gouache: liquid frisket, frisket film and good ol' masking tape.

MATERIALS

PAINT
- Gouache, acrylics or watercolour

SURFACE
- Cotton Rag watercolour paper

MATERIALS
- Liquid frisket
- Frisket film
- Low-tack painter's tape

MISCELLANEOUS
- An old brush
- A sharp pen knife

Liquid frisket is meant specifically for gouache and watercolour, but it does have its limitations. To fill in the gaps, I use painter's tape and frisket film. Both are meant for industrial painting and airbrush, respectively, but are very useful when used with gouache. These three materials each have their advantages and drawbacks, which I list below, and then explore across the following three pages

Laura is an illustrator and production artist from Vancouver, BC. She's worked in film, TV and on children's books. See more at www.laurabifano.com.

Friskets: Choose wisely before committing to a particular project…

MEDIUM	PROS	CONS
FRISKET FILM	■ Ideal for covering large surface areas ■ Transparency makes it straightforward to cut a precise design ■ Can be repositioned easily	■ Watery paint will seep underneath ■ Can peel off thicker layers of paint ■ If laid on a damp surface, glue can stay on the painting
LIQUID FRISKET	■ Excellent for smaller areas of detail ■ Can achieve expressive marks ■ Will hold up under anything	■ Ruins any brush that comes near it ■ Not great for covering large areas ■ Can't be left on the paper for longer than two weeks
PAINTER'S TAPE	■ Paint won't bleed underneath ■ Great for straight edges ■ Affordable and widely available	■ Tricky to mask out detailed shapes ■ Not ideal for covering large areas ■ Can only be used on higher-quality papers without tearing

Frisket film

Frisket film is an adhesive-backed plastic that you stick to the surface of your painting. The upside of this stuff is that it's clear, easy to reposition, and enables you to mask out large areas of an image all at once. I use Grafix's All Purpose Low-Tack frisket for working on a smooth paper, and its Extra Tack frisket for working on more toothy surfaces.

Before applying the film, make sure that the surface of your paper is completely dry, otherwise the glue will stick to the surface of the painting. It can be removed with an eraser or a scalpel, but it's painstaking work and best to be avoided. Lightly score the outline of your mask using a pen knife, taking care not to cut the surface of the painting itself, and then remove the areas of the film where the paint will be applied.

CHECK YOUR SURFACE! Apply your frisket to a dry surface, so when you remove the frisket there's no danger of damaging the paper that it's stuck to

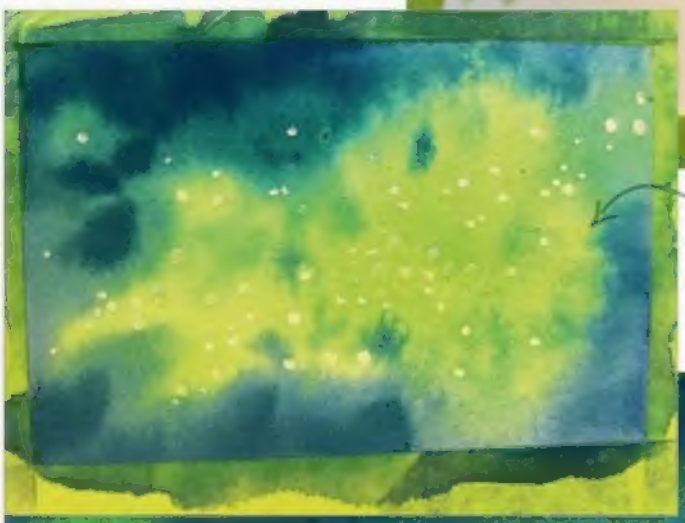
When using a frisket film with gouache, I've had the best results by applying it directly on top of an unpainted surface or a thin wash. This stuff will lift any thicker applications of paint right off the surface of the paper. It works best when used on top of acrylic, which has a more durable surface.

DRAWBACKS: The main limitation of this film is that it doesn't hold up well under a heavy wash. The best-use scenario is as a mask for thicker, more juicy applications of paint or a drybrush.

2 *Liquid frisket*

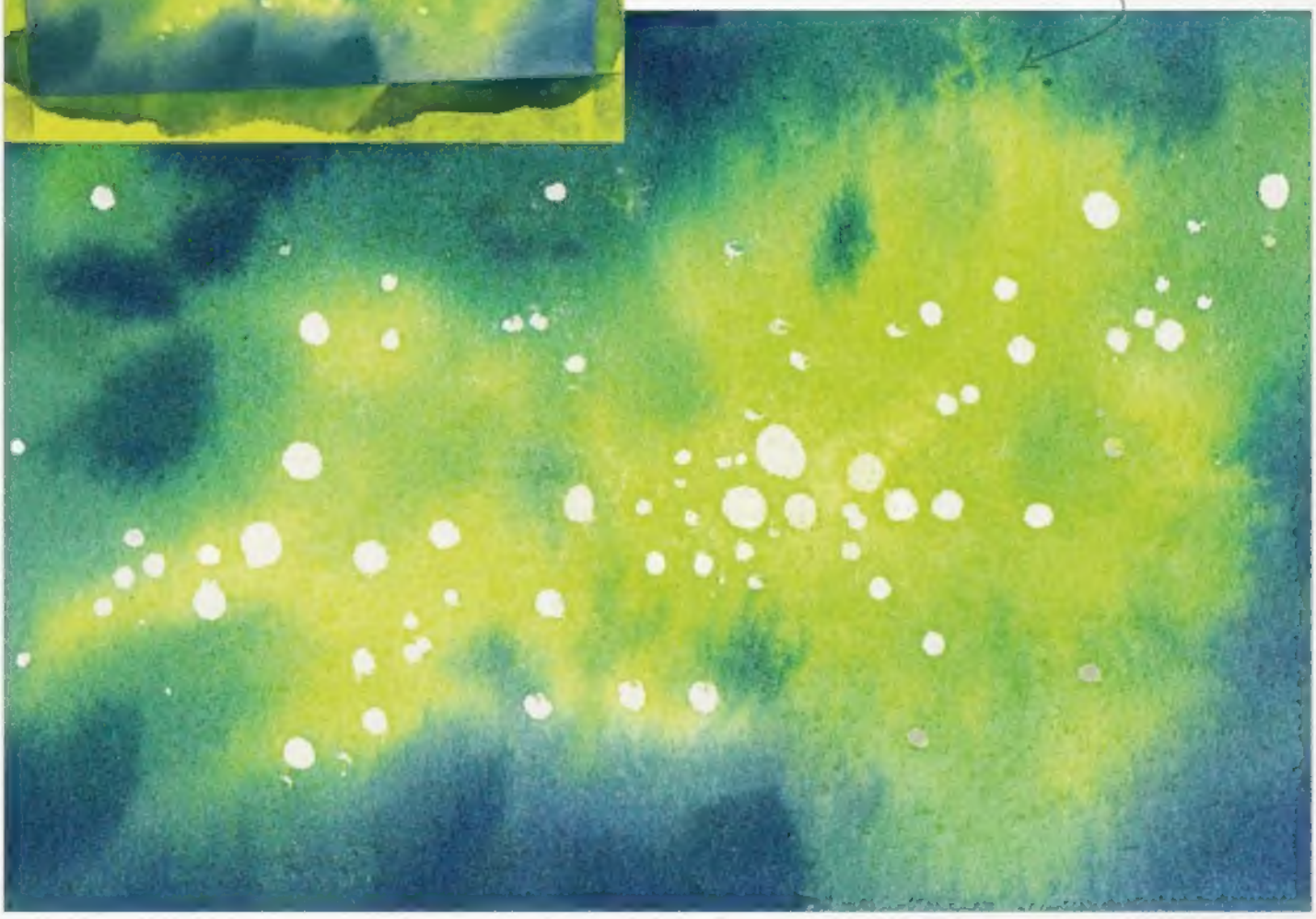
Liquid frisket is a mixture of natural latex and ammonia. Latex, in its raw form, is a natural rubbery secretion produced by some plants. Liquid frisket can be applied with a brush or crow quill nib, or through a pen applicator. Unlike with frisket paper or tape, you can achieve some expressive, painterly mark-making.

Make sure that the surface of your paper is dry before applying the liquid frisket. If it's applied to a damp surface then it can bond with the fibres of the paper and become almost impossible to remove.



Take care when applying this stuff with a brush, because it'll jam up the ferrule and ruin the bristles. Definitely don't use your sable! It can easily be removed with an eraser, pen knife or even by hand.

DRAWBACKS: I wouldn't recommend using liquid frisket for straight edges because it's difficult to apply with that much precision. It's also not great for covering large areas, and can only be left on the paper for between one and two weeks before it discolours the surface.



3 *Masking tape*

I like to use masking tape for blocking out smaller areas of the painting. The main advantages of using tape are that it's cheap, widely available, and comes with a straight edge! I use Scotch Low-Tack Painter's Tape, which can be found in pretty much any hardware store.

If you're careful you can cut out any desired shape from the tape. As with frisket film, just score it lightly with your pen knife and take care not to cut the painting surface itself. Of course, since it's an opaque frisket, extra care is needed to make sure you're cutting the right outline.

Some brands of tape are more tacky than others and can completely lift up paint applications or layers of paper. Test out a swatch before you begin larger areas of masking. Painter's tape can be hard on a lot of surfaces, so I wouldn't recommend using tape on any 'student' paper or watercolour paper rated less than 140lb.

DRAWBACKS: Unlike frisket film, most painter's tape will keep a clean edge when a heavy wash is applied on top of it. It's what I use when masking out the edges of my paintings, and I achieve a clean edge every time. The drawback of using tape is that it's not great for large areas or subsequent applications over the same surface. No matter the brand, each time you pull the tape off, it'll take a microscopic layer of paint and paper off with it. While this isn't noticeable the first couple of times, it can degrade your painting surface if overused.

First Impressions

Rob Rey

The stars are this artist's destination – at least on the canvas

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in a suburb north of Chicago. I didn't get much support in my early art endeavours, and I suppose this taught me to be stubborn about pursuing my own interests.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your art over the years?
Initially, I looked for ways to help my work connect more deeply with viewers. For a while, I was influenced by mythology and the power of these stories. Eventually, I wanted my work to help viewers to connect to the world around them through our awe-inspiring scientific reality. I want my art to be one of these access points to a non-rigid "mythology" of science.

What was your next step in art?
I've always been driven to do something that I feel makes the world a better place. I've entertained the idea of becoming a scientist to work on solar panel technology, but I've found the idea of creating artistic access points to inspiring scientific ideas fulfilling. I hope to encourage scientific literacy and appreciation, while redirecting the religious impulse to less-divisive pursuits.

STARDUST GAZING BACK
"This piece is inspired by the fact that many of the atoms that make up our bodies were once fused in the cores of old stars that have since exploded and enriched the material that formed new stars and planets."

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years?
There have been many helpful people along the way. While I was in college at the Rhode Island School of Design, illustrator Jon Foster was kind enough to let me into his studio and teach me a few things about paint. Another teacher, Shanth Enjeti, introduced me to the psychology of character design (and shape and colour). Fred Lynch drove home the basics of visual literacy and illustrative communication.

> **"I want my art to be one of these access points to a non-rigid 'mythology' of science"**

REACHING EUROPA
"This painting is about our scientific aspirations to explore Jupiter's moon, Europa, which holds intriguing possibilities for finding life beyond Earth."

What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
My first paid commission was three show posters for the Boston Lyric Opera and its annual brochure cover. The paintings have some good points and some less good, but the printing was a disaster: all greyed-out.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
A science-inspired allegorical figure. This is an example of my own personal ideas and direction in representing science, rather than simply fulfilling a client's needs.

What are your painting rituals?
Sketch, gather reference, digital colour study in Photoshop, oil colour study (time permitting), and the final painting in oil, painted section by section to avoid drying and preserve a wet-into-wet look. Music along the lines of The Lumineers and The Head and the Heart keeps me focused.

Is your art evolving?
Always. Everything still feels like an experiment. Colour, edges, stars and more are things I'm trying new things with. In terms of representing science, I'm also looking for ways to extend beyond astrophysics.

What character that you've painted do you most identify with?
Perhaps the portrait in Stardust Gazing Back. In addition to actually using it as an avatar on social media, I feel it's a good representation of an idea common to many of my works and a quote by Carl Sagan: "We are made of starstuff."

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
I worked at a frame shop for several years to pay the bills, but if I hadn't been such an illustrative/figure art purist I could have subsisted on selling landscapes and still lives in local galleries, gaining painting practice along the way – instead of just selling frames!

Rob's clients include Penguin Books, Wizards of the Coast and Fantasy Flight Games. See his art at www.robreyart.com.

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